To Find a Home.
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Relationships:
Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead & Midoriya Izuku, Midoriya Izuku & Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Midoriya Izuku & U.A. Faculty, Class 1-A & Midoriya Izuku, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead/Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, League of Villains & Midoriya Izuku, Kayama Nemuri | Midnight/Kurose Anan | Thirteen, Inui Ryou | Hound Dog/Kan Sekijirou | Vlad King, Maijima Higari | Power Loader/Snipe, Minor or Background Relationship(s), Hatsume Mei & Midoriya Izuku & Monoma Neito & Shinsou Hitoshi

Characters:
Midoriya Izuku, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead, Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Kayama Nemuri | Midnight, Kan Sekijirou | Vlad King, Maijima Higari | Power Loader, Inui Ryou | Hound Dog, Snipe (My Hero Academia), Ectoplasm (My Hero Academia), Ishiyama Ken | Cementoss, Nezu, Shuuzenji Chiyo | Recovery Girl, Iida Tenya, Toga Himiko, Monoma Neito, Hatsume Mei, Shinsou Hitoshi, Class 1-A (My Hero Academia), Class 1-B (My Hero Academia), Class 1-H (My Hero Academia), Takami Keigo | Hawks, Usagiyama Rumi | Miruko, League of Villains (My Hero Academia), Dabi | Todoroki Touya, Todoroki Shouto, Yagi Toshinori | All Might, Tsukauchi Naomasa, Kurose Anan | Thirteen, U.A.'s Big Three (My Hero Academia)

Additional Tags:
Quirkless Midoriya Izuku, BAMF Midoriya Izuku, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead Adopts Midoriya Izuku, Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic Adopts Midoriya Izuku, Shinsou Hitoshi Replaces Mineta Minoru, Protective Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead, Protective Yamada Hizashi |

Present Mic, Married Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead/Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Yagi Toshinori | All Might Being an Idiot, he doesn't mean to be, Protective U.A. Faculty (My Hero Academia), everyone will throw hands for the green bean, Mentor Nedzu (My Hero Academia), Kan Sekijirou | Vlad King Adopts Toga Himiko, blood dad and his vampire daughter, Chaotic Midoriya Izuku, Chaotic Hatsume Mei, Shinsou Hitoshi is So Done, Nonbinary Midoriya Izuku, Nonbinary Kurose Anan | Thirteen, actually the entire faculty are queer, all might is the token straight, Other Additional Tags to Be Added, because the author is too scatterbrained to plot things out fully, no beta we die like sir nighteye, Chaotic Monoma Neito, changed the tags a bit now that I've revealed the final member of this friend group, will add one more tag soon but that's spoilers (not for anything major)

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To Find a Home.

by WyvernofStories

Summary

Abandoned when they were diagnosed quirkless, Izuku spends five years living on the streets, oh and being a vigilante but that was an accident... mostly.

Until a certain hero decides that Izuku is now his problem.

Now with their new family at their side Izuku is determined to become the worlds first quirkless hero. And cause chaos along the way.
---
or the U.A staff adopt Izuku

Notes

Hey, this is my first fanfic. Originally I wasn't going to write it, but you know what they say, if you can't find it, make it. Any constructive criticism would be appreciated.

Chapter 1: Prologue

Izuku was four years old and their momma had just taken them to the doctor to see why their quirk was taking so long to come in. The doctor was a stout man that, even at that young age, Izuku thought was kind of creepy. After the numerous tests Izuku was diagnosed quirkless, for some reason their momma stopped smiling. She dragged them into the car, she didn't notice that she was holding their arm too tight.

The drive home was silent, and when they got home Izuku was sent to their room. Momma and Daddy were yelling about something, they didn't know why, they didn't get it.

Later that day Izuku was excitedly talking to Kaachan about being heroes together when Kaachan yelled at them, that they couldn't be a hero without a quirk. Izuku didn't understand, they knew that many heroes didn't use their quirk to fight, like Sir Nighteye, AllMight's sidekick. So what if they didn't have a Quirk? They were gonna be a hero no matter what! Kaachan didn't like that.

The walk home was painful as starbursts that would eventually become pale scars bloomed across their shoulder.

Izuku tried to tell Daddy what happened, he just said they deserved it, and that Kaachan was right for putting Izuku in their "place". Momma just looked at through them and sighed. Izuku didn't understand why Momma didn't stand up to Daddy, but they went upstairs anyways.

Soon Daddy barged into Izuku's room and yelled at them to "get out". Izuku didn't understand at first so they just stood there numbly until Daddy grabbed them by the arm and before Izuku could process anything they were on the porch and suddenly they were aware of the biting cold, their backpack lying at their feet.

Izuku waited for half an hour before accepting that their parents weren't going to let them in. They thought that this was the end of everything as they knew it. They were right.

Eleven years later, looking up at the gates of U.A, Izuku considered getting kicked out the best thing that ever happened to them.

Chapter 2: The beginning

Chapter Summary

A normal day for Izuku
And a hell day for Aizawa

Chapter Notes

*** : timeskip
--- : POV switch

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Running from muggers through the streets of Musutafu was not exactly the way Izuku planned on spending their day, but fate seemed determined to screw them over. *'Wouldn't be the first time'*.

How did a simple dumpster dive end up like this? Oh right, the three buffoons chasing them had decided that mugging Kubo-San would be a good idea. Seriously, what kind of jackass do you have to be to rob an elderly woman who spent her days volunteering at the local soup kitchen!?

And of course Izuku couldn't just keep their head down, no, they had to jump in and try to stop them. *'I guess old habits die hard'* they thought as they ran down filth alleyways, jumping on dumpsters and climbing rusted out fire escapes that creaked ominously with every step, following escape routes memorized long ago. The thugs, however, could not keep up, *'they must be new'* Izuku mused to themself, as they lost their pursuers within five minutes. They sighed as they headed through memory filled alleyways, amusing themself by imagining how annoyed those thugs must be that a nine-year-old had outrun them.

Eventually they reached an abandoned warehouse that, on the outside at least, looked abandoned, rusted roofing, worn down walls, in fact the only sign that the place had ever been functioning was a half-torn sign that designated the place as storage for a long since bankrupt mechanics company. Opening the door they walked into what had been their home for the past five years.

They stashed whatever scavenged supplies that had survived the trip into cupboards that were probably about to fall apart. They didn't change out of the grimy clothes, too mentally exhausted to even

bother. They ate some stale bread that was about to go bad, carefully tearing out the mouldy bits and some of the canned tuna they'd managed to snag from the local grocery store, wrinkling their nose at the smell, it was probably fine. They dug around in their backpack, a bright yellow thing with more stitching and tears than intact fabric, was it obvious and recognizable and not at all great for sneaking around? Yeah, they'd gotten caught stealing on multiple occasions because the thing attracted attention, that doesn't mean they're going to get rid of it though. After all, Inko (because she was always Inko now, never Momma) had gotten it for them back when Izuku was still her child. Maybe they're sentimental for wanting to remember the times before their diagnosis, but it was the one thing about their old life they couldn't part with.

Shaking themselves out of their thoughts, Izuku fished out a worn notebook labeled "Analysis #8" in neat handwriting, the books used to be called Hero Analysis for the Future, but they'd long since lost hope for that dream to ever come true deep down they still held on.

Izuku flopped down on the nest of moth-eaten blankets and raggedy pillows they called a bed, clicked their pen, and started writing up an analysis on a new hero that debuted last week, a lady with a mutation quirk that gave her the traits of a rabbit, she called herself Miruko. Izuku sat there, writing away in the kind of half aware state that comes from extreme focus. Before they knew it, it was getting dark outside.

Izuku flopped down on the blankets, contemplating not going out tonight since they were already sore from the chase that afternoon. Bu eventually the allure of the fresh night air was too much to resist. Izuku quickly threw on a dark green hoodie that covered their iconic curly hair and a black face mask to hide their freckles. Pocketing some pepper spray and a butterfly knife they had stolen permanently borrowed from a mugger. Finally they grabbed their staff (it was literally the pole of some street sign) and set off into the night.

Running across the rooftops of Musatafu was exhilarating, Izuku had initially started free running to distract from the nightmares they knew would greet them if the slept to get rid of excess energy from the day, and besides, it was good practice for running from bullies. Their legs pounding on the concrete of the roofs while their steps were almost silent. The only thing that could make people notice them was their bright red *quirkless* shoes.

They had never liked those shoes, but it's not like there were other

options. No. The brand that made the specialty shoes that quirkless people needed due to their extra pinky joint specifically made the shoes as noticeable as possible, so that everyone knew when they saw a quirkless person, knew when they saw someone lesser. Of course, thanks to the low population of quirkless nowadays (most of that twenty percent were in their eighties) there were a lot of people who actually didn't recognise the shoes. Most of the ones that did were either quirkless themselves or knew a quirkless person. Izuku was sure that they could probably make themselves a different coloured pair of shoes, but they didn't have the materials, nor the skills to do so.

A scream for help jolted Izuku out of their musings. Running to where they'd heard it they saw a small woman being cornered by two thugs.

"Listen here lady, no-one's gonna come save you, not in this part of town, just give us the money and no-one gets hurt".

Izuku quickly took stock of the quirks at play, *'okay, the first guy's got horns of some kind, plus hooves, likely some kind of bull mutation, likely coupled with enhanced strength, maybe poor eyesight as well? Oh yeah he's squinting, I can work with that. Second guy doesn't have any obvious mutations so I should be more careful since I don't know what his quir- oh never mind his nails just turned into needles, okay, so, stay out of grabbing range for the needle guy, and see if I can trick the bull guy into running into a wall or something'*.

With that plan solidly set Izuku jumped down in front of the lady, using their staff to block a hit from the needle guy. They noticed that the lady had already run off as they started dodging the two thugs, they couldn't rely on one hit knocking either of the guys out, they might be fast and stealthy but their offence is certainly something they don't get opportunities to practice. Besides, quirkless people shouldn't be able to fight back, they were weak, ***Izuku*** was weak.

Eventually the needle guy got a bit too close for comfort and Izuku reflexively swung with their staff, hitting the guy right in the groin. He screamed and writhed on the ground. Quickly knocking him out Izuku then focused on the bull guy, as suspected he'd been having a lot of trouble hitting them due to poor eyesight, so Izuku decided to play matador and lead the guy around until he got really mad and charged. Izuku dodged just before impact and the bull guy crashed right into the wall causing him to fall backwards, unconscious.

Izuku pulled a bunch of zip-ties from their pocket and tied the two unconscious thugs to the handle of a nearby dumpster, wrote their

sticky note, explaining what exactly happened before scurrying up the fire escape and disappearing before the cops actually showed up.

Honestly, becoming a vigilante was an accident, really, it sounds ridiculous but they genuinely didn't realise what they were doing until they saw a newspaper calling them one. They just wanted to do some free-running, it just so happened that people tend to commit crimes at night, and Izuku being Izuku, they intervened every time they saw or heard a crime being committed. They just hoped no-one sent any heroes after them.

Wraith is what they were called, several cops and civilians making reference to their tendency to disappear into the night like a ghost. Their only identifiers were a green hoodie, red shoes and a metal staff strapped to their back. Always neat and tidy in their takedowns and often the only sign that they'd been there being a small sticky note attached to the tied-up criminals listing what their crimes were.

Of course, this was *none* of Shouta's business, or at least it wasn't until Tsukauchi contacted him about finding the vigilante and bringing them in. Truth be told, Shouta didn't have a major issue with vigilantes unlike most limelight heroes. As long as they were decent human beings genuinely out to help people Shouta left them alone or even worked with them occasionally. So really, he didn't know why it was him specifically that the detective had requested, but oh well, there was nothing he could do about it.

Of course actually *finding* them was the tough part, between juggling regular hero work, his new job at U.A (Honestly, why on earth his homeroom teacher turned principal thought it would be a good idea to hire *him* of all people Shouta didn't know, but that rat was sadistic enough where this was likely some kind of cruel test) not to mention the general energy that was required to be in the same social group as Nemuri and Hizashi, the underground hero barely had time to look over the case and its *very* limited information. So if Shouta started drinking more coffee, staying up later and generally being grumpier than normal, well, only his husband needed to know.

"MORNING SHOU!!!!" *speak of the devil.*

Yamada Hizashi, otherwise known as Present Mic, danced (literally *danced*) into the kitchen where Shouta was drinking coffee straight from the pot and started making breakfast, humming to himself all the while *'seriously, how does he have so much energy, its six in the morning'*

"Morning Zashi" he replied tiredly

"Hey! What's with the extra grumpy face?".

Now, don't get him wrong, Shouta loved his husband, but every once in a while he just wants Hizashi to shut the fuck up. Shouta sighed, knowing he'd have to give an answer at some point "It's nothing Sunshine, there's just this new vigilante on the streets and Tsukauchi wants me to investigate"

"Oh? well what'cha got so far?" Hizashi was looking over Shouta's shoulder at the file in his hand. The file in question was Wraith's latest arrest, two drug dealers who claimed that they were just doing a regular deal when a "little demon thing" appeared out of nowhere and knocked them both out. So little information meant that anything useful would have to be found by Shouta himself, and the patterns of arrests showed that either Wraith had a lot of patrol routes and regularly switched them up, or they had no set patrol route. Shouta was really hoping it was the first option because tracking down someone who had no definable pattern was always hell.

"They have red shoes."

"And?"

"That's it, that's all anyone knows for certain, anything else, age, quirk, fighting style? Nothing." Shouta waved the file at Hizashi as if it would magically give him more answers. Unfortunately it was uncooperative.

"Oh" Hizashi read through the file as well "no wonder they want you on this case, they need someone to track Wraith down"

"Yeah, but between this and teaching" Shouta shook his head "how the hell do you manage three jobs?" he asked enviously, "seriously, you've been juggling hero work your show and teaching for a whole year now".

Instead of offering any answers Hizashi just laughed "you know me dear, I never could just relax! Now hurry up and get your hero costume, we're gonna be late to work, I want to actually introduce you to the other staff this time, its been a week and you haven't even tried talking to them!"

Shouta scowled at the thought, he really didn't need to know the staff, there was a reason he hid in the vents the entire week instead of

staying in the teachers lounge, the other teachers, whoever they were, are *loud, the only teacher he interacted with regularly was Kan, since they're the homeroom teachers for the two heroics courses, the other undergrounder was enough of a nuisance during patrol, and it seemed their rivalry had bled over into their teaching.*

Hizashi apparently was *not going to wait for Shouta to finish his coffee and dragged him out to the car "come on, you can review the case later, last time I was late Nezu threatened to give me everyone else's paperwork for a week."*

Shouta huffed in amusement at that, of course the rat satan would do something like that. And Hizashi was right, he could figure out more of the case on patrol tonight, it's not like Wraith would just show up and introduce themself after all, right?

Chapter End Notes

Fair warning, this is gonna take a long time to get to cannon, we have six years of shenanigans to cover after all.

Also I'll try to do weekly updates but that isn't guaranteed.

Bonus:
Aizawa: Wow, this new vigilante must have had years of training and be really skilled at fighting!
Wraith, surviving on luck and luck alone: *nervous laughter*

Chapter 3: School Rules™

Chapter Summary

A brief look at Izuku's school life

Chapter Notes

Minor TW for dissociation and thoughts of suicide.

Its not in a lot of detail but if you want to skip the dissociation part its the paragraph directly after "However their lack of reaction seemed to infuriate Bakugo"

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku sighed as they used a napkin to scrub at their desk, the hateful words and slurs scrawled across it felt like needles turning their heart into a pin cushion. Their classmates quietly giggled in the background, some gathering up the courage to make snide comments at them. Bakugo (not Kachan, not after everything) seemed to be especially angry, for some reason, Izuku wasn't sure, they hadn't done anything to piss him off lately had they? Oh well, they'd find out during lunch at least. Maybe there was a new rule they hadn't learned?.

The rules were never told to them, at least not directly.

The first one they learned was when they were five, it was the easiest. No muttering. After the fifth time Izuku had gotten slapped for their creepy muttering it wasn't creepy they'd learned their lesson.

The second was learned when they were seven. Never get a test score above seventy. This one took a bit more experimenting, after Izuku got reprimanded for cheating they didn't cheat they tried to avoid cheating again, the teacher again told them they were cheating when they got ninety-seven on their next test. "There's no way a *thing* like you could get mark like this without cheating" thats what Maki-sensei said the third time it happened. And Izuku believed her, after all, if she was wrong someone would have said something, right? After that they made sure to mark answers wrong, just enough to pass, and certainly never above a seventy

The third and fourth rules were learned together. Always let them hit you, and never spread rumours. It was when they had gotten a cold and been really sick, because of that Izuku's brain to mouth filter had

disappeared. Bakugo had tried to blast them but they had dodged out of the way, and when the teacher asked what happened, Izuku told the truth lied and said that Bakugo had attacked them. Later that day Bakugo and his friends cornered Izuku outside of school and gave them a beating that was ten times worse than they had ever gotten. After that Izuku always let people hit them, or it would be worse later.

Of course, Izuku had made sure to follow those rules to a T, so why was Bakugo so mad at them? They mused as the walked towards the cafeteria, making sure to trip over the outstretched leg that one of the other students had shoved in their path *'rule three'*. Izuku went through the familiar routine of getting their food, making sure the food didn't get thrown fall onto the floor, and then sneaking their way to the rooftop where nobody would bother them, it was their moment of peace. A moment where Izuku could let themself believe that they were just a normal kid, and everything was okay (if they usually spent most of that time crying then only they would know). But today, that moment of peace was interrupted.

'Worthless, that's all you'll ever be' the unsolicited thought creeped through Izuku's head like venom *'maybe you should just-'*,. **No.** Nope, not in a million years, Izuku might believe that they are weak, and they might have almost given up on being a hero, but they still valued their life, *right?*. Then again, people who run around at night being a vigilante (and wasn't that odd, that people actually considered them dangerous enough to be called that) probably aren't the picture of mental health.

The warning bell rang as Izuku was startled out of their musings by the terror of being late, last time that had happened Maki-sensei had tried to call Inko, she almost managed it as well, but Izuku somehow managed to convince her that Inko was at work and shouldn't be bothered with a useless Deku (they had mentally cringed while saying that). Izuku didn't know what their parents would do if they ever had to deal with them again, but they knew it wasn't good. And they knew Inko hadn't said a word to the Bakugos either, considering that the explosive blonde had never used it to mock them.

Even from outside of the classroom door Izuku could hear the snickers of their classmates. They took a deep breath before opening the door, knowing what was awaiting them. As they stepped in their eyes slowly trailed to their desk. A bouquet of spider lilies sat there, taunting them, telling them that they shouldn't exist. Izuku simply picked it up and threw it out of the window.

Class was boring as usual, Izuku didn't exactly know why, perhaps it was because they were too stupid to understand the materials they'd memorised the entire textbook by now. Maki-sensei droned on and on about physics, it seemed like even she didn't want to be here, and she kept sending thinly veiled glares at Izuku throughout the lesson, even stifling a laugh (their classmates weren't so polite) when Mizukami used his quirk to throw water at their notebook, leaving them to try and salvage the notes they'd taken. *'Of course, everyone laugh at the quirkless kid'* Izuku thought bitterly before snapping themself out of their thoughts wondering how on earth they had gotten it into their head that they could think so disrespectfully about their classmates they were right to feel bitter, after everything that's been done to them.

As the bell rang Izuku immediately ran out of the classroom, the sounds of explosions quickly followed by a yell of **"Deku!"** as Bakugo chased them down the hallway. Izuku knew that he'd catch up, that they would let him catch them get caught. If he didn't, Izuku would get beaten black and blue the next day. So they stood there as he let off explosion after explosion, burning clothes and skin and hair. Izuku knew those would scar later, they had so, *so* many, across their shoulders and back, as well as a few on their chest. Starburst, line and patch shaped scars covered their body from various classmates and sometimes teachers, whether caused by quirks or sharp pieces of wire and other improvised weapons. The blooming pain across their back was nothing new, in fact Izuku barely even felt it, thank goodness for their high pain tolerance. However their lack of reaction seemed to infuriate Bakugo.

"Oi Deku! Aren't you gonna cry? Are you trying to act tough? Huh? You think you're better than me!" he yelled as he continued beating Izuku. There was more yelling but Izuku couldn't hear, their thoughts spiralling as the outside world became duller. At some point Bakugo had seemingly gotten bored and left, Izuku didn't know when, or how long afterwards that they had just laid on the ground, staring up at nothing, they're pretty sure some other classmates kicked them sometime. They didn't move for a while, until some stray cat started sniffing at them, perhaps to see if they were edible.

Perhaps mercifully they didn't find any trouble on the way back, limping back to their warehouse, ignoring the odd looks they got from strangers on the street. Izuku supposed no-one in their right mind would try and mug the kid who's clearly been beaten up already, nothing of value there. Their backpack had a new hole in it that they'd have to patch up when they got to the warehouse, and their uniform

were burned in a lot of places, luckily they weren't completely noticeable, Bakugo's quirk still not being strong enough to fully burn a hole into the cloth, only on closer inspection would one find tiny pockmarked holes over patches of burned skin. Izuku shuddered to think of the damage he would be able to do if he continued to grow stronger, maybe even as much as a real bomb. *'If he blew someone up would there be bleeding everywhere or would they just be cooked meat? Actually there wouldn't be any blood, the wounds would be cauterised. If he trained enough maybe he could use his explosions to make himself faster, if he just aimed behind him. If he aimed down would he be able to fly?'* they continued analysing the possibilities of Bakugo's quirk, it's not that difficult of course, the upside of being forced to interact with him and his quirk on a daily basis they supposed, in fact they had done this analysis hundreds of times over, some questions were still unanswered, like the flight one, but it was a good way to occupy their thoughts while their brain was on autopilot as they followed the familiar alleyways back to their warehouse.

Once inside Izuku went over to the cabinet where they kept the medical supplies, it was mostly burn cream of course, and a small box with a singly roll of bandages and a needle. Luckily they hadn't had to stitch up any wounds lately since their last bit of suture had run out months ago and they hadn't had the opportunity to steal more. Quickly tending to their wounds Izuku sighed as they weighed the idea of skipping patrol that night. On the one hand not going out meant that Izuku would have to deal with the nightmares sleep more than two hours or loose their mind of boredom, on the other hand, they didn't want to risk getting themselves killed because they couldn't run properly. In the end, the option of not risking death won out, so Izuku changed out of uniform and into something cosier, torn sweatpants and a T-shirt that had the word pyjamas written across the front. Finally flopping down in the blanket nest Izuku mentally prepared for the terrors that awaited them.

Drowning. It feels like they're drowning. The words flooding their lungs, every breath feels like a damnation of their own life. Every insult they've ever heard, every time someone calls them worthless, every burn and bruise and broken bone. And suddenly they're back on their parent's porch, outside a house that was never their home. Inside they heard laughter. They want to turn and run, but their body puppets itself to the window. They watch as their parents smile and laugh and dance. Talking about how much happier they are now that the thing that pretended to be their child is gone. Then they're on the roof of their school, being held over the edge by a grinning Bakugo "you know, it would be so much better for everyone if you died" he stares at them, ruby eyes meeting emerald. They're in the

classroom, surrounded by teachers and students as they get beaten up, they can feel their consciousness slipping as they cry and scream and beg for help, everyone looks at them like a spectacle, like a show, like their death meant nothing more than momentary entertainment. As darkness took over their consciousness the last thing they see is the joyful faces of everyone they used to call family, smiling as they are finally free of the shackle that is Izuku.

Izuku woke up gasping, clawing at their chest trying to get the horrible words out of their lungs, tears rolling down their face, sobbing harshly as they struggle to get any air outside of shuddering, shallow breaths. They sat there for a long while gathering themself as sobs racked their chest. Maybe tomorrow would be a better day. Izuku chuckled to themself, no, tomorrow wouldn't be better, there hasn't been a single 'better' day since they were diagnosed.

Chapter End Notes

I hope I got all the TWs for this chapter, if I missed any please let me know.
And here's your meme for the chapter:
Izuku: huh, everyone's treating me like shit
Izuku: could it be because they're bigots?
Izuku: Nah.
Izuku's subconscious: ISTG IF YOU DON'T PUNCH THEM

Chapter 4: The first meeting

Chapter Summary

Aizawa finds his problem child, even if he doesn't know it yet.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku was definitely being followed, this wasn't a gut feeling or anything, this was the fact that several patrols now had been accented by someone watching them, definitely not getting close enough to be noticed by most people. But Izuku wasn't most people, Izuku was used to bullies who try to follow them through crowds and teachers who watch their every move, not to mention living where they did meant learning to avoid muggers and rapists. The point was that Izuku knew when they were being watched, the question now was, who. It was most likely a professional given how silently they moved, villain or hero. Either way whoever it was definitely wanted to catch them. A lot of local gangs wanted them dead. And if it was a pro hero? Being caught meant getting arrested, and getting arrested either meant getting put into foster care, or being returned back to their parents. Honestly Izuku would prefer the villains, whatever that said about their mental state they really didn't want to know.

They had a plan, it wasn't a great one but they had it. They were going to talk to the person that they had dubbed "shadow", a bit on the nose, but it would do until they learnt the person's name, or, as much of a name as they could get, Izuku wasn't delusional enough to think they would get their shadow's real name. Tonight was the night where they would let their shadow get close enough to question them, not too close of course, hopefully they would be able to keep at least a two meter distance. They'd spent the last few days trying to find a way to learn how to approach their shadow, tracking their shadow's every movement and constantly giving them the slip. Honestly they might have just been getting a little impatient about the whole thing. It was clear that their shadow didn't know where they lived or they would have been visited at the warehouse by now. Not to mention the shadow didn't ever get close enough to get any details of their appearance, unless they had some kind of sight enhancement or perception quirk. So Izuku felt rather safe about the fact that they

would be able to maintain some level of anonymity in their meeting.

Of course, they'd need to find out who their shadow was first. It would be idiotic to go into this plan without knowing their shadow's capabilities.

At this point Shouta was wondering if he just had bad luck. It had been a full hour into his patrol and he still hadn't caught a glimpse of Wraith. The vigilante was certainly slippery, he hadn't even managed to get close in the last few patrols, either Wraith was just normally that stealthy, or (and Shouta really hoped it wasn't the second option) Wraith already knew that he was tailing them. Either way, Wraith was skilled, Shouta certainly wasn't going to underestimate his opponent, especially when considering that he had no idea what quirk they had.

Shouta had originally thought it was some kind of enhancer or stealth quirk given how quickly the vigilante disappeared across rooftops, Shouta *could* just try and use erasure on Wraith to see what happened, but he wasn't quite sure if he had been discovered and he would rather not give himself away if he wasn't. Speaking of the vigilante, Shouta paused as he noticed a particular person on one of the nearby rooftops, the now extremely familiar green hoodie and red shoes giving them away as Wraith. Shouta stopped just short of the rooftop, waiting for Wraith to make a move, a full week (including the weekend) of tracking the vigilante showed that they were almost never still, always in motion unless they were catching their breath. He would however, take this opportunity to try and observe Wraith, to see if he could identify any kind of behaviours that would indicate personality. Contrary to most of the rumours that had rapidly spread around the U.A student body, Shouta was actually incredibly perceptive when it comes to peoples emotions and behaviours, not that he'd ever use that to socialise, being good at recognising peoples emotions and being an extrovert were distinctly separate things.

Wraith was scribbling away in what looked like a notebook, Shouta offhandedly wondered what the contents were, there was something written on the cover but Shouta couldn't see anything except the number eight. Whatever the contents were, they were filling the pages with incredible speed. It seemed like the vigilante was fully engrossed in their writing, a perfect time to observe the vigilante in an unguarded state.

Of course now was the time when something happened. That

something being a very high pitched scream that was somehow louder that Hizashi's emanating from the alleyways. And suddenly a blur of movement a few meters ahead of him, running towards the noise. Shouta quickly followed, focused on not letting Wraith notice him, but also fully prepared to help if needed, he was still a hero after all.

He saw Wraith stop near a building, so he stopped a few meters behind them, and Wraith was waiting, for, something. After about two minutes Shouta was about to go down there himself, half wondering why Wraith hadn't tried to intervene yet, when they slowly started to descend with a remarkable quiet and stealth that spoke to years of practice, he idly pondered how long they had trained before going full vigilante. Shouta rushed to the edge of the building and looked down, expecting to see a fight but then quickly realised why wraith had waited. In the middle of the alleyway was a sickly looking man, being held hostage by a lady wearing elegant clothes that certainly had no place in this side of town, she was holding a glowing hand to the man's neck, probably her quirk ready to fire. Meanwhile Wraith was sneaking around the back, out of the woman's sight, Shouta had a bad feeling about this, he got ready to activate his quirk the second that the woman tried anything.

Izuku was writing up an analysis of the latest villain when they felt it, the unmistakable feeling of being *watched*. As much as they would love to just turn around and call their shadow out, people tended to get aggressive when caught by their target, and besides, let their shadow think that they had the upper hand, it gave Izuku a better chance to figure out exactly who they were dealing with.

When they heard the screams they bolted towards the noise, surveying the situation, the lady looked to be mugging the man, they decided to sneak down, wait for the man to start emptying his pockets to get the woman away from him before they could do anything.

Of course nothing ever went as planned for them since the universe seemed to hate them, so when, the second that the lady took her focus away from the man, Izuku attacked she immediately turned around and blindly fired her quirk at them, some kind of energy, they quickly dodged the first blast, having expected that, what they didn't expect was the man trying to punch them, *'what the hell? I just saved you!?'* Izuku thought indignantly as the man continued attacking them. This combined with the woman's energy beams, Izuku was finding it difficult to get a hit in, it didn't help that they were also trying to

prevent the man and woman from killing each other, it seemed that the man's quirk was an enhancer.

Suddenly the woman's hands stopped glowing and she looked startled, looking at her hands like they were broken, did she hit her quirk limit? Izuku couldn't ponder more as they sill had the man to deal with, so they used their staff to knock the man out, while the woman was incapacitated by, something, was that their shadow? Turning around they caught a figure wearing all black, using a grey scarf like thing to tie up the woman, *'wait a damn second'* Izuku's eyes darted to the top of the figures face where a pair of yellow goggles covering the eyes confirmed Izuku's suspicions *'holy shit that's Eraserhead'*. Izuku needed to leave *now*, Eraserhead was one of the best underground heroes in Musutafu, Izuku heard about him through whispers in the underground. And Izuku would be lying if they said Eraserhead wasn't one of their favourite heroes, All Might was still number one but Eraserhead was just so cool and he helped people that limelight hero's forgot about... aaand he would probably be able to catch Izuku in a heartbeat if he wanted, so Izuku needed to stop geeking out and ***run***.

Shouta had just finished tying up the lady when he turned around and saw Wraith running away like a bat out of hell. He would have gone after them but the two unconscious people prevented him from doing so, *'well if Wraith didn't know they were being followed earlier, they certainly know now'* Shouta suppressed the urge to groan in annoyance realising that this would make things infinitely more difficult for the investigation. He sighed and pulled out his phone.

"Hello Eraser, please tell me you have an update on the Wraith case" Detective Tsukauchi's voice was heard through the alleyway.

"Well, about that..."

Chapter End Notes

Memes for the chapter :>
Aizawa: Wraith has no clue I'm following them
Izuku: I know someone's here

Izuku: I wonder who my shadow is? They can't be that bad right?
Izuku after seeing Aizawa: Holy shit I'm screwed

Chapter 5: Answers? Not yet.

Chapter Summary

Aizawa and Izuku stop a drug deal, Aizawa asks some questions, and Izuku avoids them.

Chapter Notes

---- : POV switch
Signed dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Running through the streets of Musutafu, Izuku followed the sounds of fighting towards an area that was generally considered a drug dealer's haven. *'Great, just what I need, another deal gone wrong, lets just hope Eraserhead doesn't show up on this one'* it had been a few days since they had figured out their shadow's identity, since then Eraserhead had given up on being unseen. Now Izuku had to be the one hiding, because they would there was no way to be able to outrun an actual hero. Still, they just couldn't stop being Wraith, people needed them, when they were Wraith they weren't useless, they weren't Deku. Izuku jumped across the roofs, reaching the fight quickly.

It looked like the two sides were evenly matched, this must have been between two gangs. Twice the enemies, Izuku sighed, and then winced when the action aggravated their bruised ribs, Bakugo had certainly not gone easy on them today, perhaps they shouldn't have gotten in his way again but they couldn't just stand there.

Izuku was having lunch on the roof when they saw Bakugo and his lackeys cornering one of the other students, a young boy with fly mutations, Izuku couldn't quite remember his name. If they were anyone else they might have just sat there with their lunch and ignored it, but they were Izuku. They used the nearby tree to climb down, running towards the group as Bakugo fired explosion after explosion in the fly kid's face.

"Stop!" Izuku signed, getting in between Bakugo and his victim, an explosion hitting his side. Izuku had learnt JSL a long time ago, at first because Bakugo's quirk was damaging his hearing, and they wanted to be able to talk to him despite that. About a year after their diagnosis however, they had learnt it for a completely different reason, sometimes when they tried to talk, especially to strangers, they just couldn't, it was like their

throat just closed up, so they used JSL as a way to communicate without having to speak.

"Get out of the way Deku! Or else!" Bakugo sneered at them miniature explosions crackling in his palms and the burnt caramel smell from the nitroglycerin filling the air. Izuku stood their ground, meanwhile the other kids backed off, knowing that Bakugo didn't take kindly to anyone stealing his victims.

Izuku shook themselves out of their thoughts and leapt down, ignoring the various aches from their body. Several heads turned their way, temporarily pausing the fight. "Well, what do we have here?" One of them snickered "a little vigilante". Izuku tried to be indignant at being called little, but they were nine, and shorter than most nine-year-olds at that, so the comment was kind of justified. Izuku brandished their staff as they got ready for a fight.

The leader seemed to have minor feline mutations, most notably his ears and legs. Izuku waited for him to make the first move, they couldn't risk getting caught off guard if the leader had some hidden aspect to his quirk. The leader threw a quick left hook. Izuku dodged by scrambling backwards *'so he has enhanced speed, or at least, insanely quick reflexes'* Izuku thought as they dodged the hit, striking back with their staff, the leader blocked it. The two continued to trade blows until the leader managed to land a hit, Izuku hissed in pain as the leader's fist struck their arm, right where Bakugo had bruised them. Izuku swung back, the staff whacking the leader on the head, dazing him. Unfortunately the other thugs seemed to finally register Izuku as a threat and surrounded them. Izuku got into a defensive stance as they realised that they might have gotten in over their head.

Shouta was simply on patrol when he saw Wraith fighting off a bunch of thugs, he immediately jumped down to help them, hopefully this time they wouldn't run away. Shouta hasn't managed to get anywhere near Wraith since that fight a few days ago, it seemed that Wraith was now actively avoiding him, this could be a chance to capture them, or at least talk. He quickly captured two of the thugs, they had been caught off guard by his arrival, then looked to see if Wraith needed any help, but they seemed to be doing alright, so he focused on the other three. One seemed to have a mutation quirk that gave them six eyes and the other two didn't have any visible quirks. Shouta quickly apprehended the extra eyed man, meanwhile it seemed that Wraith had knocked out the leader and was fighting the last two criminals, knocking them out in quick succession as it seemed that neither of them had any combat training and were unarmed.

Wraith turned to him and quickly turned to run. Shouta needed to do something, or he'd loose this chance.

"Hey, wait!"

Izuku temporarily froze in their tracks, momentarily weighing their options they turned around to face the underground hero. They wanted to ask why the hero was following them, but they also didn't want him to figure out that they were a child. Izuku thought back to the plan they had made, yes they had wanted to meet their shadow, but that was before they realised that their shadow was one of the most fearsome underground heroes in Musutafu, plus that was on their terms, not in the middle of a random battle. They realised that Eraserhead was looking at them expectantly, so, steeling their nerves they made their choice.

Shouta watched Wraith freeze at the sound of his voice and slowly turn around. *'Okay, this seems good, they're not running away, now what?'* Shouta thought to himself as the vigilante stood there for several seconds before tying their staff back onto their back and signing a question.

"What do you want?"

Shouta was surprised for a second, and then silently thanked the fact that he was fluent in JSL thanks to Hizashi, "just wanted to ask some questions" he said casually, better to gain the vigilante's trust, it was unlikely they would allow themselves to get arrested if they didn't trust him, plus, no vigilante becomes what they are without a damn good reason. After all, most people who want to save people become heroes, so the people who become vigilantes usually become that way because they have a vendetta or because they couldn't become a hero for some reason.

"Right, because that's why you've been following me for the past two weeks," Wraith was completely tensed and clearly ready to run, not that Shouta wouldn't be the same way in their situation, after all, they were a vigilante, they had no reason to trust a hero. Shouta wished that he could see their face but they had a mask on that covered the lower half, plus their hoodie covered the upper half in shadow, so it was almost impossible to see their face, let alone get any tells for their emotions.

"Two weeks? You've known the whole time!?" Shouta was impressed, Wraith must be extremely well trained, to detect someone as skilled as

Shouta.

Wraith nodded "I was trying to figure out who you are, didn't expect my shadow to be... you"

Shouta tilted his head "alright well, that's impressive, how many years have you been training? Not a lot of people can notice me when I'm trailing them," Shouta was hoping to get an answer, then he might be able to get an approximate age for the vigilante.

Izuku was panicking mildly, Eraserhead was clearly trying to fish for information, so Izuku decided to be vague about it, just to throw him off the trail a bit. "A few years now," technically it was the truth, if you thought about it, they'd been 'training' ever since they were kicked out, running from bullies, stealing to survive, all of these could probably be seen as training, from a certain point of view.

Eraserhead looked like he wanted to say something else when Izuku heard police sirens in the distance, the second that Eraserhead turned to face the entrance to the alleyway they used the opportunity to once again make a swift getaway. Climbing up onto the roofs and then almost immediately dipping down into another alleyway to avoid being detected.

Shouta turned back towards the alleyway and saw that Wraith was once again, gone, he muttered several curses that would make Nemuri proud as he tried to identify which direction the vigilante had gone in. The police cars pulled into the alleyway and Detective Tsukauchi walked up to him.

"Hey Eraser, what's going on?" the detective asked, already taking notes on the scene as several police officers started arresting the criminals.

"Drug deal gone wrong, Wraith was already here by the time I stumbled across the fight, managed to get them to answer some vague questions, but they ran as soon as they heard your sirens" Shouta explained

"Well, you can tell me the rest back at the station since I still need a detailed statement from you"

Shouta sighed, this was gonna be a long night

Chapter End Notes

sorry for the lackluster chapter and the late update.
I've been rather busy this week, but I'll have the next chapter up by Saturday.
Next chapter we get a small timeskip and finally some Dadzawa.

Chapter 6: Suspicions

Chapter Summary

Finally a little Dadzawa

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The gates to Aldera Elementary loomed overhead as Izuku felt an overall sense of dread for the day, well, they always felt a sense of dread when school was concerned, but today felt like it was going to be extra awful. The rules of the school running through their mind as they stepped through the gates, feeling like they were stepping towards their own death.

Tripping on the outstretched legs, keeping their head down and somehow managing to make their way through the first part of the day without drawing attention to themself.

They had sat down to their maths lesson when things started going wrong for them, they had dutifully scrubbed out the hateful words on their desk, disposed of the spider lilies sitting on their desk. But then, then they got careless, the topic of discussion from the two students next to Izuku turned towards the latest hero fight, and Izuku, despite themself, had begun muttering without realizing it. They got yelled at by the teacher for disrupting class with their muttering, ignored the jibes and giggles thrown their way as the teacher continued teaching, and throwing glares and grimaces at Izuku. They felt so stupid, they were doing so well, why did they mumble, why did they break the first rule? Couldn't they have just kept their mouth shut? Izuku sat glumly at their rooftop hideout as they watched the other kids play heroes or show off their quirks. They really needed to stop being such a nuisance in class, the other students needed to be focused, and how could they be focused when Izuku was sitting there muttering like the creepy, useless, ***Deku*** that they were.

Izuku was so lost in thought that they almost didn't hear the school bell and had to scramble to class. In that scramble they ran into one of the other students, specifically one of the upperclassmen, Iwai-san, a

student with a major mean streak as she would use her quirk on anyone that she deemed, *weaker*, which was a problem because her quirk let her grow stone spikes from her skin, and those spikes were, *very* sharp. Izuku froze as she turned towards them, anger and disgust clear on her face, they had only been put in their place by her a few times, and all of those times they had broken bones at worst and deep gashes at best, Izuku just hopes she'd go easy on them today, but it seemed that luck was not on their side.

"Well look what we have here" Iwai-san sneered "watch where you're going Deku, a thing like you should be careful, or people might hurt you" her voice was a mocking sweetness, knowing that she was the exact kind of person she was talking about.

"I'm sorry" Izuku tried to apologize, even if they knew that it was futile, the least they could do was be polite.

"Sorry? Is that all you can say, and with those stupid gestures too." Iwai-san laughed "that's all a Deku can do huh? Well, you're good for one other thing, **quirk practice**". The skin on her hands suddenly split and hardened, spikes growing out of the back of her hand in a way that made them effective as knives. She loomed over them menacingly, hands ready to mercilessly stab and slice into flesh, the stone spikes seemingly hungry for blood, and Izuku braced themself for the feeling of tearing flesh and grinding bone that they knew would come once Iwai-san decided to stop playing with her food, like the cat stalking the mouse. And when she did, Izuku sat there and let it happen, and when she stabbed into their leg, they let it happen.

It had been a few months since first meeting Wraith, and Shouta was slowly getting used to the vigilante, the two would run into each other on patrol almost every night, usually when one of them has a fight that goes on long enough for the other to notice. Shouta had a file dedicated to the things he knew about the vigilante, and although the file was still missing any identifying detail like age (the vigilante's height would be explained away by a quirk side effect), as well as quirk, since they never used it. It wasn't an enhancer, unless it was a mutation, because Shouta had tried erasing Wraith's quirk while they were running from him and they didn't even react, so most likely it was a non-combative quirk. The information that Shouta *did* have was about Wraith's fighting style and behavioral patterns, like how they always focused on dodging and evasive maneuvers instead of offense, and in fact, the vigilante's offensive capabilities were certainly underdeveloped, the one time that Shouta had seen Wraith throw a punch was when they had been backed into a corner and it looked like

the most amateurish punch he had ever seen. Shouta wondered exactly how they had trained their stealth and evasive abilities so well without even thinking to train their offensive abilities.

The two of them had also communicated at certain points, with Wraith consistently using sign language, from those short conversations Shouta had learnt that Wraith was extremely good at reading people, usually able to identify sinister motives within criminals. Wraith only ever talked about the criminals in a very surface level, despite that, in battle they exploited weaknesses that could only be known through a deep understanding of someone's quirk. Wraith was a complete contradiction, confident and friendly one moment, skittish and unsure the next, Shouta was starting to wonder if there was something more to that, but Wraith had successfully avoided every personal, or personal adjacent question that Shouta has asked. So he stuck to helping out the vigilante and hoping that he could gain their trust over time.

That's when the vigilante themself landed on the roof next to them, but the sound was odd, Wraith was always near silent with their movements, it took all of Shouta's situational awareness to hear them, but this time? Shouta heard the vigilante very clearly. The hero turned to look at them, half surprised and half curious about the change in pattern, when he noticed something concerning, Wraith was clearly favouring one of their legs over the other, they were very good at hiding it, which was somehow even more concerning than the fact that they were hurt in the first place.

"Hey Eraser" Wraith seemed otherwise unharmed even being their usual, slightly cautious but still somehow friendly, self. But even Shouta, who once fully ignored being stabbed in the shoulder to the point that Hizashi had to make him stay home under threat of hiding all the coffee, wouldn't go on patrol with an injury that hinders movement, that kind of recklessness is what got people killed.

"You're hurt, why are you on patrol?"

Izuku was absolutely *not* freaking out, they were going to be calm and they were going to talk their way out of this. They tried to act nonchalant "What are you talking about?", *'great, just great, that totally wasn't a dumb thing to say'* they almost slapped themself about how stupid that was. Eraserhead definitely looked annoyed now, then again, he always looked annoyed so it was difficult to tell, but Izuku was sure he was more annoyed than before.

“Wraith, you’re favouring your left leg, you’re clearly injured, you shouldn’t be on patrol”, Izuku tried to figure out what Eraserhead was thinking, but unlike most people he was incredibly difficult to read, they supposed that was a skill that came from being an underground hero.

”That’s alright, I’ve patrolled with worse injuries” Izuku was trying to explain that everything was fine, they could handle this, they once patrolled with third degree burns on their chest, it hurt like hell, but they survived, so what’s the big deal? Eraserhead clearly thought it was concerning however.

”You’ve what? That could get you killed!” If Izuku didn’t know better, they’d think that the hero was concerned for them, but that was impossible, why would anyone be concerned about a Deku like them? Eraserhead continued talking “you should go home, it’s dangerous for you to be out here with that injury, you could get killed, get some rest”. Izuku couldn’t understand the hero’s words, why would he be worried about if Izuku got killed or not? Sure he was a hero, and heros are supposed to care, but no-one needed to care about a quirkless Deku. And that’s when it hit them, Eraserhead didn’t know they were quirkless, he was treating them like a normal person, of course he would be concerned.

Izuku didn’t quite know what to do with this information, if Eraserhead thought that they had a quirk, the way he was treating them made sense, but what would happen once he found out? Izuku didn’t have to think too hard, the best-case scenario was that he would ignore Izuku, leave them like their parents did, worst case, he hurts them like the teachers at Aldera, Izuku doubted that a hero would try and kill them, but that option was also on the table. Izuku knew that they couldn’t let Eraserhead figure out that they were quirkless, that would only lead to trouble, and besides, the hero was concerned for them, no-one was concerned for them, and the thought of that kind of care being directed at them made them feel warm and fuzzy inside. Izuku knew they were being selfish, they didn’t deserve this kind of attention, but they couldn’t help themself, it was so nice to have someone care if they died or not, someone who didn’t actively *want* them to die, maybe they could keep up this charade for a little while longer.

”Alright, I’ll go home, see you tomorrow Eraser” Wraith signed, then they turned and climbed down the fire escape, and while Shouta tried to follow to make sure that the vigilante got home safe, Wraith’s uncanny disappearing ability meant that they quickly escaped him.

Shouta didn’t quite know what to do, the vigilante had mentioned that they had patrolled through worse injuries, and Shouta was just as worried about that as he was annoyed that Wraith didn’t seem to take their own safety seriously, it reminded him of some of his students. And that feeling again, like he was missing something really important.

Still, Shouta had a job to do so he continued with his own patrol, determined to ask Wraith some questions next time he saw them. If Wraith was consistently getting hurt to that extent, there was most likely something sinister going on, the vigilante was in danger somehow, and Shouta was a hero, he didn’t ignore people in danger.

Chapter End Notes

> Well, I'm late again, oops, I promise this won't be a common thing, but I had a play to act in yesterday.
> here are some memes to make up for the late chapter:
>
> Aizawa: I feel like I'm missing something
> Also Aizawa: Wraith reminds me of my students.... nah, it's probably a coincidence.
>
> Aizawa: *Shows basic human decency*
> Izuku: Why are you being so nice to me!?

Chapter 7: Conversations and Concern.

Chapter Summary

Aizawa tags along with Izuku's patrol, some concerning things come to light.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
"Signed Dialogue"
also mild dissociation warning? I don't know if that's the right term for what happens.
Warning is for the paragraph starting with: Instantly two of the assailants went down
summary for that paragraph is at the end notes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Eraserhead was standing on the rooftop where Izuku had met with him yesterday, their leg was much better now, still not completely healed, but no-one had targeted it during school today, so it was actually able to heal semi-properly, especially since Eraserhead had sent them home the second he saw them limping. Izuku was still trying to process the idea that the hero actually cared about them, but it made some kind of sense after realizing that he thought they had a quirk. Still, Izuku had been mentally preparing for the other shoe to drop, and maybe they were a bit silly for thinking that Eraserhead would instantly know that they were quirkless, but they were used to everyone in their life knowing, and anyone that didn't was quickly told by others about that fact, warning them to stay away from the quirkless Deku. As if they were diseased, and Izuku supposed that, in a way, they were, after all they had to have something wrong with them to be quirkless. So Izuku had spent most of the night figuring out how to keep their secret if Eraserhead ever asked about why they didn't use a quirk. They could just lie and say it was a minor quirk, after all, having an almost useless quirk was still better than being completely useless, and they could easily fake something like that.

Landing softly behind the hero, who noticed them the second they touched the concrete of the roof, Izuku walked up to him, noting exactly how the hero's gaze immediately went to their leg. "Don't worry, it's healed now" Izuku signed before starting to leave, eager to feel the cool night air, and to their surprise, Eraserhead was following

them. Izuku stopped in their tracks and turned around instantly to face the hero, making a confused expression underneath their mask, Eraserhead simply tilted his head at them, sensing that they had a question.

”Why are you following me?” the hero hadn’t followed them around for a while now, mostly having stopped after their first conversation, so why was he following them now? Of course, the hero looked even more annoyed than normal today, if that was even possible.

”You expect me to let you patrol on your own after being injured just yesterday, honestly, unless you’ve got a healing quirk a wound like that wouldn’t heal completely in a day.”

Izuku was a bit caught off guard by the answer, not entirely expecting the concern that leaked through the tone of irritation, they seriously needed to quit being surprised if they were going to keep up this façade of a life. Nonetheless something in the hero’s tone made them think twice of arguing, so they simply turned around and continued on their way with the patrol, ever mindful of the hero following them.

The first hour of patrol was uneventful, the criminals must have decided to take a break for the night or something because it was eerily quiet, especially unexpected given the heightened activity lately, but nonetheless appreciated. However as always, the peace never lasted. Eventually the two began running into various crimes being committed, a robbery here, a drunk fight there, generally only one of them was required to solve the issue, however it was simply more efficient to work in tandem, while it is *very* awkward at first, the two of them slowly gain an understanding of each other’s fighting styles throughout the night, of course, eventually something had to go wrong.

Running along the rooftops the two stumbled upon a civilian being beaten up in a back alley, immediately the both of them jumped into action, Wraith taking stock of the situation, *’three assailants, one seems to have a weak fire quirk, very common but still dangerous, the other two are unknown quirks, the civilian seems to be bruised and a little burned but not too badly hurt’*, it seemed that they had gotten there just in time.

Instantly two of the assailants went down as both Izuku and Eraserhead leapt down into a surprise attack leaving only the fire wielder left who tried to scuffle backwards, clearly making for a retreat as they didn’t seem to be willing to fight. Something in the back of Izuku’s mind roared in anger at the action *’so you’ll be glad to*

beat on someone weaker than you, but you'll run like a coward the second someone actually stands up to you!?' Izuku didn't quite know where that particular thought came from, or why they were so furious at the bully attacker, either way they punched the guy with much more force than they had intended, hard enough that it left the guy's nose bleeding, and then the man's fire licked at the edges of their hoodie, the scent of burning fiber, suddenly turns to burning flesh as the dark alleyway fills with the sounds of popping and crackling that Izuku knew couldn't be there, and the man stood in front of them, his fire a red glow that reminded Izuku all too much of ruby red eyes and suddenly the man was unconscious at their feet, and their knuckles felt wet, dripping with a dark red.

Wraith knocked out the last assailant as Shouta handcuffed the others. Shouta was still a bit reluctant to let them patrol given the injury they had yesterday, but as far as Shouta could tell, their fighting and parkour was not hindered by whatever was left of their leg injury. He turned around to see Wraith standing over the fire wielder, blood dripping from the man's nose and their shaking hand, and pure rage radiating off of them like a sickly wave, drowning everything in that alley with cloying anger.

"Wraith?"

The vigilante seemed to snap out of whatever stupor they had been in and dragged the guy over to where the other two lay unconscious, roughly dropping him before swiftly making their escape to the rooftops, Shouta quickly followed, concerned about whatever just happened. He stopped as Wraith sat on the edge of the roof, looking down at the scene as blue and red lights flooded the alleyway.
"Wraith, what happened there?" Shouta asked, standing awkwardly a few feet away from the vigilante, not wanting to startle them, but also not wanting to leave them alone.

"I don't know, I-" Wraith paused, hands shaking as they tried to collect themself "he was running away, he hurt someone and couldn't even face the consequences" each word was shakier and shakier as Wraith signed

"You aren't just talking about that man, are you?" Shouta asked, although the answer was fairly obvious.

Wraith sighed and shook their head "I don't know, he just reminded me of, a friend" Shouta had a sinking suspicion, remembering the injury Wraith had yesterday, and how they had acted as if it was the

most normal thing in the world.

”Was that, friend, the reason you were hurt yesterday?” Shouta was trying to be gentle, but he was sure it didn’t sound right, where was Hizashi when you needed him? He was always much better at this whole, comfort, thing than Shouta was.

Wraith shook their head so rapidly that Shouta almost worried that the vigilante’s head would fall off. ”No, no, that wasn’t him, not that time” Wraith quickly defended this ‘friend’, and Shouta really didn’t like the picture that this was painting. But before he could ask any more questions about what the vigilante meant by “not that time”, Wraith continued hurriedly ”besides, I’ve never wanted to hurt him, I don’t know why I got so angry at that other guy”.

”Okay, well, why did he remind you of your friend?”

Izuku very carefully thought through their answer, if they said the wrong thing, Eraserhead could find out that they were quirkless! ”He always hurts people he thinks are weaker than him, but then pretends like it was the victims fault when he gets confronted”, in reality Bakugo was probably the worst bully in that school, while most just focused on the quirkiness little 'Deku,' Bakugo and a few others like Iwai-san go after anyone weaker than themselves.

”So why call him your friend, he’s targeting you as well, right?”

”I mean, we used to be friends, and he could be harsh at times, but nothing I couldn’t take, but then he started hurting other people, and we just, drifted apart”.

”What about you?”

”What?” Izuku was confused.

”You said you stopped being friends once he started hurting *other* people, didn’t you stop being friends once he started hurting you?”

Izuku froze, how were they supposed to explain to the hero that they didn’t matter, if they did, the hero would find out they were quirkless, Izuku desperately tried to think of ways to get themself out of this corner they had been backed into, would running away be a good idea? Maybe, it was worth a shot at least. Izuku scrambled back to their feet and sprinted, mind running purely on adrenaline as instinct took them back to their warehouse.

Wraith bolted away and Shouta sighed internally, okay, that was clearly a sore topic, he should avoid that in the future, at least until Wraith trusted him enough to tell on their own. This was going to be tough, maybe he could ask Hizashi for help, his husband always knew exactly what to say to get people to trust him.

Chapter End Notes

> Summary for the dissociation warning: Izuku fights a guy who acts like Bakugo and has a fire quirk, they start feeling like Bakugo is there and knocks the guy unconscious a bit more violently than necessary.

Chapter 8: Food builds trust right?

Chapter Summary

> Aizawa trying to repair the trust that he broke, plus a little Erasermic fluff since I realised I haven't actually written Hizashi as a character since the first chapter.

Chapter Notes

> --- : POV switch
> "Signed Dialogue"

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shouta stared down at the cup of coffe in his hands, Wraith was avoiding him, they have been for three days, he had seriously messed up. Okay, maybe he shouldn't have pressed the issue when the vigilante was clearly stressed by it. But the past was the past, and Hizashi had immediatley called him an idiot when he had gotten home that day and told him what had happened. But his husband also gave him some advice on how to deal with Wraith, mostly involving giving the vigilante some space and basically assuming that he's starting from zero unless proven otherwise. On the other hand Hizashi was also very concerned about Wraith possibly being abused by a "friend", both of them were, Hizashi suggested bringing it up, but not pushing it if Wraith didn't want to talk.

Speaking of his husband, "hey Moonlight!" Hizashi called out to him in a singsong voice "leaving for patrol already?" he asked, as if Hizashi didn't have Shouta's patrol times memorized to the minute.

Shouta smiled softly, "yeah, why? " he turned, Hizashi looked concerned, and a bit tired, which was unusual for him, the man was normally a bundle of energy even on the longest days. "Is something wrong Sunshine?"

Hizashi laughed, although it was a forced one, "is it that obvious?" He sighed "Shou, you've been worrying about Wraith constantly", if it were anyone else Shouta would have denied being worried about anything, but Hizashi was the one person he could never lie to.

"I'm the one who chased them off, I have to find them, especially if they're in danger, and we know they are" Shouta was beginning to ramble when he felt Hizashi hug him tightly.

“I’m sure they just want some space, who knows maybe tonights the night they decide to show up again, either way, you need to calm down, it’s not doing anyone any good if you’re running yourself ragged all patrol looking for a vigilante who has a reputation of not being found unless they want to be”. Shouta could hear the concern in his husband’s voice and felt more than a little guilty, yeah he had been doing way more hero work than normal, but was it really that obvious that he was just hoping to run into the vigilante?

”Alright, I’ll stop looking for them, but I have to get going, so if you wouldn’t mind letting go of me?” Hizashi complied, although not before giving him a quick kiss, and also making sure that Shouta took his dinner with him, because apparently jelly pouches didn’t count as a real dinner according to Hizashi.

Izuku sat in their warehouse bandaging up the injuries they’d gotten today, thankfully it wasn’t too bad, only a few second degree burns and various cuts and bruises, clearly the universe had decided to go easy on them today, or it was waiting for another opportunity to screw them over.

They hadn’t been patrolling for the last three days, every time they thought about going, they remembered how they had hurt that man, and the conversation that had followed. Why did they run away? It had seemed like such a good idea at the time. Of course they had run, that was all a worthless Deku like them could do they could fight. Of course not patroling meant that they were sleeping more, and that also meant nightmares.

Drowning. Blood. Burning. Pain.

So *many* nightmares. And they were different, still filled with twisted versions of whatever torment the day had inflicted upon them, but also a new fear. *Abandonment*

Yelling. Hurt. Their parents faces melt away as their mind takes them to a rooftop. A familiar rooftop. What happened if they hadn’t run away. Hurt. They were alone

Alone. ***Alone. ALONE.***

Izuku felt a jolt of pain as their nails scratched at the burns on their arm, snapping them out of their spiral. They looked at the blood on their fingers and sighed, wrapping the new wound with what little bandages they had left. They had run out of burn cream a while ago,

and were yet to steal more, so their plan was to avoid Bakugo as much as possible, at least until they could steal more. It was a risky plan, when he figured out what they were doing (Bakugo wasn't stupid he *would* figure it out) they would be in so much more trouble than if they had just let him catch them.

Izuku sighed as they looked at their blanket nest, they didn't want to sleep, but they really didn't want to go on patrol and risk running into Eraserhead, they didn't want to face the disapointment they were sure he felt. Sighing they looked out at the night sky, it was already dark, way past their usual patrol times, but, better late than never, right?

Shouta noticed some shouting and crashing from the next street over, which abruptly stopped with a pair of thuds. Parkouring over he saw what looked to be the aftermath of a drunk fight, if the stench of alcohol that surrounded the area was any indication. And checking on the unconcious people, was Wraith, the vigilante then quickly scaled the nearby fire escape, getting out of the scene before any police showed up. Shouta immediately wanted to run up to them and make sure they were safe, and then maybe ask for answers, but that went so poorly last time, so he took his husband's advice and decided to say calm.

Izuku stared at Eraserhead, well there goes the plan of avoiding him, Izuku mentally braced themself for any kind of insult that he could possibly throw at them.

"Hey Wraith" Eraserhead looked oddly awkward, which, seemed so out of place with the image of a fearsome underground hero. Izuku took a deep breath and sat down near the hero.

"Hey Eraserhead" Izuku signed hesitantly.

A long silence stretched between the two, Izuku heard a sigh from Eraserhead "are you okay?"

And wasn't that an interesting question, were they okay? No, not really, they hadn't been okay for a long time, but they weren't about to admit that to Eraserhead. "Yeah, I'm fine".

"Alright, well, im sorry about… the last conversation that we had" honestly Izuku didn't know it was possible for someone so intimidating to be so awkward, it would be funny if they werent the subject of the conversation.

”Why it was my fault for running away?” Why was Eraserhead looking at them oddly? They didn’t say anything weird, right?

”You don’t have to apologize, look, you don’t have to talk about it if you don’t want to” a pause, Izuku certainly didn’t want to talk about it, keep the pretense a little longer, pretend that they could be cared for, just a little longer. They waited for the hero to demand an answer.

Eraserhead just sighed and sat down next to them, he seemed to be thinking about something.

Shouta looked at the vigilante, who seemed even smaller than normal. This was not going the way he had hoped, quick, what could he do to break this tension, uhh… Wait! The dinner that Hizashi packed, food was always a good peace offering, right?

Izuku looked up at a rustling sound. Eraserhead was holding out an onigiri towards them. They looked at him, their silence must have conveyed their confusion

”Uh, are you hungry?” Izuku stayed silent, why was Eraserhead offering them food, what did he want from them? Or maybe he was just going to pull it away the second they reached for it. Apparently Eraserhead took their silence as a question “well, you don’t have to take it, I just thought you might want…”

It had been, literal years since they’d had something better than stolen bread or stolen energy bars, or stolen anything really. Maybe it would be nice

---

Wraith cautiously reached out a hand towards the offered food, and Shouta was reminded of a feral kitten, so he sat very, *very*, still. And as soon as their hand closed around the onigiri they yanked their hand backwards, like they expected it to be taken away from them, another concerning thing to investigate. The vigilante turned their head away and lifted their mask, Shouta turned his head away, the vigilante was probably trying to preserve their identity and he’d respect that.

The two of them sat in silence for a while until Shouta heard Wraith stand up, he turned his head to face them again. ”Thank you, for the food”.

Izuku watched as Eraserhead’s mouth twitched into a barely there smile, “it’s no problem” he stood up with them and that smile was

gone “we’ve still got the rest of our patrols to complete” he turned to Izuku “see you tomorrow Wraith”. The hero parkoured away, leaving Wraith standing alone, yet somehow, they didn’t feel alone at all, they felt the warmth of someone who actually cared about them. Or at least someone who cared about their vigilante self. Eraserhead was right, they should get back to patrol.

Izuku spent the rest of the night thinking about that interaction, maybe they could get used to this.

Chapter End Notes

> I hope y'all are happy with the Erasermic scene, as someone who has a love/hate relationship with writing cheesy romance, that scene had me pulling my hair out.
> The memes are back :>
> Aizawa talking about Izuku: Cat? Is that a kitty cat!?

Chapter 9: Kid?

Chapter Summary

> After a particularly unfortunate fight, Aizawa finally puts the puzzle pieces together, some of them at least.

Chapter Notes

> ---- : POV switch
> Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shouta looked around as he landed on a now familiar rooftop, it had been a month since that awkward first step and the two of them had been meeting on this rooftop every day before and after their patrols. Shouta usually showed up first with Wraith joining him a few minutes after, they'd chat and then head off on their own patrol routes, or, what counted as a patrol route for Wraith, as they apparently just went wherever they felt like. Seeing that the vigilante had yet to show up, Shouta sat down and waited.

After a few minutes he heard a familiar thud from behind him, Wraith walked up to the edge of the rooftop and sat down next to him "hey Eraser, hope I didn't keep you waiting".

"Don't worry about it, we have other things to worry about, it seems like there's been more criminal activity near the south end".

Izuku hummed to themself, that matched up with what they'd been experiencing on patrols, but those were always drug rings, not always the same ones either. They should probably leave whatever that was to the heroes " Nothing too serious?"

"Probably not, but Detective Tsukauchi asked me to keep an eye on that area just in case" Eraserhead said with a sigh "just great, more work for me". Izuku knew that he didn't actually mind, from tagging along with the hero's patrols Izuku had learnt more of his personality, and melodramatic was certainly not a trait they had expected Eraserhead of all people to have, and yet here they are.

"Well, I could always tag along, it would be more efficient, and we could cover more ground, right?" honestly Izuku barely had any idea what they were talking about, but they were planning on going

towards the south end anyway, and they didn't really want to deal with all that fighting alone.

"Just keep up", Eraserhead parkoured away, leaving Izuku to try and catch up. They smiled under their mask.

Over the last month Izuku found that having someone to talk to, someone who didn't immediately avoid their presence, was one of the best feelings they'd ever felt. They still hadn't told the hero about their analysis, they didn't need to ruin the peace between them with their creepy notes, and Eraserhead *definitely* didn't need to know about the entry that he had in their notebook. Despite all of that they smiled underneath their mask, soon catching up to the hero as the two of them jumped between the buildings of Musutafu.

Shouta should have known something would happen. Though, to be fair, nothing had happened almost all night, but just before the two of them were about to head back to their rooftop, trouble struck.

Wraith had been fighting some mugger with an enhancement quirk when she yanked the metal staff out of the vigilante's hands. At which point they had immediately backed off, desperately dodging the woman's powered strikes. It was like someone else had begun fighting, since Wraith had suddenly become much more erratic in their movements. The mugger managed to get a good hit on the vigilante before Shouta could restrain her.

He had immediately dragged Wraith out of the alleyway they'd been fighting in, despite the fact that they insisted that they were completely fine. Shouta was concerned, it was like they had lost all confidence the second that they were weaponless, not to mention their hand-to-hand skills could use, *a lot*, of work. "Are you okay?" he asked them, and his voice was *definitely not* concerned.

"I'm fine, plus I managed to get my staff back so let's get going" Wraith tried to jump away only to be entangled in a length of capture scarf.

Shouta glared at them, erasure activating on instinct, it really was like trying to deal with his students, the reckless brats. "Alright, now that I know you're okay, *what the **hell***".

Izuku braced themself for whatever would get yelled at them, what happened, how did they mess up, was it because they couldn't defeat that mugger? They knew it was dangerous to get their hopes up, of

course this wouldn't last, why would anyone want them around.

"You could have gotten seriously hurt"

Huh? That's it? No yelling? Nothing about how much of a waste of space they were? Izuku looked up at Eraserhead, head tilting in confusion. The hero sighed "you clearly don't know how to fight without that staff of yours, did you ever try and learn hand-to-hand combat!?" he looked more concerned than angry, although there was some of that too. Izuku silently shook their head and tried to sign something before realizing that their hands were pinned to their side, Eraserhead seemed to notice that too and untangled them, only enough that their hands were free, they were still unable to move.

If the hero could see their face right now, he'd see the most sheepish look someone could possibly have. "I never really got the chance to learn any hand-to-hand" Izuku signed, looking down at their shoes in shame.

"What."

Shouta stared at the vigilante in pure disbelief, what on earth, how the hell does someone 'not get the chance' to learn a basic combat skill, honestly, it's like they didn't even try, and the irritation in the back of his mind grew, did they think that they could just get by with whatever quirk they had? Unlikely, from what Shouta's seen their quirk was most likely non-combative, in which case any sensible person would train their fighting skills to compensate.

Wraith seemed to shrink in on themselves as they hesitantly started signing again "well, running away from bullies every day only does so much…" something about that sentence rang alarm bells in Shouta's mind. *"Bullies? That's how a kid would describe their mean classmates, not a grown adult talking about other people, why would Wraith…* ***oh, shit****"*.

Shouta didn't quite know how to approach this situation, if his suspicions were correct (and he really hoped they weren't) Wraith was probably a kid, maybe high school age, or younger. "Wraith…" Shouta took a quiet breath "how old are you?". He'd asked the question before of course, but every time Wraith would deflect by changing the topic, he'd thought that it was to preserve their identity, but, if they were a kid, a lot of things were starting to make sense.

Wraith immediately tensed at his question. Shouta could see the gears

turning in their head ”why do you ask?” they looked ready to run, and they had started struggling against the capture weapon.

”Calm down, I only asked because, well you said that you were being bullied, adults don’t usually call people bullies” Shouta saw the moment that they froze and looked like they desperately wanted to curl in on themselves, that was basically all the conformation Shouta needed. “You’re a kid, aren’t you.” it was less of a question and more of a statement, his mind already looking through past behavior and noting all the signs that were there from the beginning. *Fuck*. This was a kid, with barely any fighting experience, running around and being a vigilante.

Izuku stared at the hero next to them, knowing that he’d probably realized by now, this was bad, they couldn’t escape and Eraserhead was probably going to yell at them, or hurt them. They should have thought about what they were saying, how did they let that slip? It wasn’t like they had let their guard down, right? Izuku realized that was exactly what had happened, they’d gotten too comfortable and forgotten that they were supposed to be pretending. Not that they were that good at it in the first place, but this was the worst slip up they could have possibly made aside from telling him that they were quirkless. “Hey, kid, can you hear me?”

Izuku realized that they’d zoned out and looked back at Eraserhead, and took a step back, wait what, wasn’t the capture weapon. With a start they realized that the hero had freed them sometime during their spiral. ”Yeah, I can hear you, sorry”

”Don’t apologize kid, you didn’t do anything wrong” Izuku would have disagreed, but, if he thought they didn’t do anything wrong, maybe they didn’t? The hero sat down a little bit away from them, giving them space.

The silence stretched for a good minute before Eraserhead spoke “so is there any way I could convince you to quit being a vigilante?” Izuku thought about it, would they be willing to quit? They knew they should say yes, but, really, being Wraith was all they really had, it meant that they could make a difference. Izuku shook their head, there was no way they’d ever give up not being useless, even if it was pretend.

Eraserhead sighed “I thought so, in that case I can’t have you running around without at least knowing how to fight properly”. Izuku had to do a double take, did that mean he was just going to let them continue

to be a vigilante!? Eraserhead must have seen their confusion “I’ll let you keep doing this, as long as you follow some rules, first, you’re not going to patrol alone, I’ll take you with me during my patrols. Second, you listen to me, if I say you’re not getting involved, *listen*. Lastly, we need to work on your hand-to-hand skills, so I’ll be training you, and until I say you’re ready you’re not going to fight anyone, got it?” Izuku nodded rapidly. “Good, how about we start your first lesson now?”. Izuku barely had time to react before they were being pinned to the ground by the hero “lesson one, never let your guard down, always be ready to dodge an attack. Try again.” Izuku got up, ready to dodge another punch, and was almost immediately tangled in capture scarf “what did I just say? Be ready for *anything*”. Shaking their head Izuku focused on Eraserhead’s movements, this time they dodged a punch, but was then taken out by the next one. The next few attempts went roughly the same way, with Izuku being taken out in seconds. At some point they managed to dodge a few attacks, but they still got pinned within a minute. After what was likely an hour but felt much longer to Izuku, Eraserhead stood back and didn’t seem to be attacking the second they got up again.

“It’s getting late for both of us, we should get back to our homes” a pause “I’m guessing your parents aren’t worried about you?” Izuku almost laughed, their parents didn’t even know where they were, still, there was no point in messing up again.

”They’re probably asleep right now, I can get back to my house easily enough” and before the hero could ask more questions, they jumped down the fire escape and ducked into an alleyway that they knew was practically invisible from above.

Sure enough they got home easily. Flopping into their blanket nest they found that they could fall asleep much easier than most days, they knew they’d probably be sore in the morning but honestly? They couldn’t find it in them to care, not when they were smiling giddily from the realization that they were actually cared about, at least by one person.

Their sleep was blissfully nightmare free.

Chapter End Notes

Finally, Dad acquired.
Now how long is it gonna be until he realises it?
Hope y'all are ready for the next chapter :>

Chapter 10: The Reveal!

Chapter Summary

ITS TIME!!!!

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

Warnings for bullying and suicide baiting, and just, Bakugo.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Humming filled the warehouse as Izuku gathered their backpack and notes, their uniform was ratty and motheaten, not to mention the neumerous patchwork fixes from the times they'd tried to stitch up the holes they had gotten from various bullies. There were several patches where the stitching was falling apart, they'd have to patch them up again, not that they could afford a new one. They also debate taking their notebook with them, they'd almost filled out Analysis #8, they'd have to steal a new book soon. Ultimatley they decided to take it, even if the risk was there, they could leave it in their bag during school, and there was a relativley new hero patroling in the area. And without access to the internet, they had to chase down the heroes if they wanted to analyse them, or hear about them from their classmates conversations.

Izuku guessed that they'd be a few minutes early to class as they walked down the road, passing by a food vendor they tried to snatch a sandwich. Sneaking it from the stand when the vendor's back was turned, and then slipping into an alleyway before the man could notice. Izuku jogged as they ate the sandwich, hoping to get to Aldera early so as to avoid the majority of the bullies.

They tried to get to class without incident, but as always Bakugo had also shown up early, he always shows up early because he knows that Izuku does that too. Of course they couldn't avoid him, no, that would mean a worse punishment later and the last time that had happened, Izuku shuddered to think about that. So the day started off rather slow, for some reason everyone else seemed to leave them alone today, it was probably because they were all too excited for the weekend to think about a useless Deku, Fridays were always better for

them. Izuku sat down at their desk, it seemed that no-one had gotten to it yet, that was sure to change the second that the next class bell rang.

The next few classes went mostly okay, other than the usual jeers, then lunch happened, and, as usual, the other students hunted them through the halls. They remembered which students to take hits from, and which students they could avoid without repercussions as they tried to get through lunch without too much incident.

Sitting peacefully at their rooftop hideout Izuku took out their notebook, looking around cautiously to make sure no-one would see them. Sometimes students would wander up to the roof, or be dragged there, and ususally Izuku hid whenever that happened, there was no-way they could let anyone find their hideout, or they'd loose the only place they could hide from the torture, and then... Shaking themselves out of their thoughts, not wanting to envision what could happen. Still they should be very carefull especially when they had their notebook with them.

Izuku heard screams from the stairwell as some poor soul was dragged up to the roof, Bakugo practically kicked down the door as his lackeys shoved someone in front of them. Izuku felt a pang of sympathy for the poor soul that had gotten on his bad side today, the safest option would be staying hidden. So Izuku ran out onto the main space of the roof and put themself between Bakugo's explosions and the student behind them. Their hands desperatley clutching onto their notebook, wait, they still had their notebook with them, no no no. They curled over the book trying to block it from veiw and desperatley hoping it hadn't been seen.

"Oi nerd, what the fuck is that?" Bakugo ripped the notebook out of their hands "still keeping the stalker notes eh!? Fuckin' creepy Deku, I thought I taught you to stop that" he opened the book and started reading through it, mocking the contents the entire time. Izuku watched as Bakugo grinned "you know, this shit's creepy as fuck, I could do us all a favour and get rid of it", they watched as he grabbed pages out of the book, tearing them out of the book, lighting off explosions, destroying most of the pages, turning them to ash and scraps. A whole seven months of notes, gone, just like that.

Izuku saw that only three pages were left, they couldn't see which hero they were on but they felt themself tearing up, they just couldn't believe it. Before they could even think they grabbed the last three pages and held them tight to their chest, curling in to protect them.

They didn't know why they were protecting something that didn't deserve to exist, but they had always been selfish, the notes brought them undeserved joy, and they selfishly protected it. Even though Bakugo had not stopped trying to get them, even though the explosions burned, Izuku took them numbly, tears threatened to fall from their eyes as Bakugo appeared to switch targets from the papers to Izuku, yelling at them, they wouldn't have been able to talk back even if they wanted to.

"You stupid, useless Deku, why do you even bother trying? I wonder why you havent been killed yet, someone really should leave you and your creepy muttering and stalker notes for dead. Actually why don't you do everyone a favour and find a quiet ditch to die in? Quit being a burden to everyone, do your parents still put up with you? They shouldn't. Creepy stupid Deku with your creepy fucking books. You know, I bet even if you died, no-one would care, I wouldn't."

Izuku was left burned and battered as Bakugo apparently decided that he'd done enough, leaving them to painfully pull themself up, a soft crinkling sound reminding them of the pages from their notebook. They checked which hero had been spared, huh, it was the pages they'd done on Eraserhead, probably the most detailed pages they had on any hero. They stared at the rest of the pages, or, what was left of them.*'Don't cry, don't cry* ***don't*** *cry'*, they'd have to redo all the entries into a new notebook, and they wouldn't be able to take notes on the new hero untill they stole a new one.

The entire rest of the day was filled with mocking laughs as apparently Bakugo had been complaining about their notebook, and everyone had heard. Maki-Sensei scolded them for being a distraction, and gave them detention. Which Izuku panicked about, normally detention meant the teachers would just yell at them about whatever they'd done, but they also needed to get home, patch up their injuries and go for patrol, not to mention the combat training afterwards.

Detention was just as hellish as they had expected, but they had no time to think about that, if they didn't hurry they'd be late. The second they got home they started patching up their burns, the worst ones at least, since they needed to conserve their remaning bandages. It was already dark by the time they left, they just hoped that Eraser hadn't been waiting for too long. Of course, they were so caught up in their hurry that they didn't realised they'd stuffed the pages into their hoodie pocket instead of leaving them at the warehouse.

Wraith had been acting odd all patrol, first they'd shown up late,

which by itself wasn't too unusual, Shouta just assumed that they had been held back for some reason. They also kept messing with their hoodie and was generally being more fidgety than normal. At least they weren't fighting most of the criminals, they might have been practicing for over a week now, but still had a lot to learn before they were ready to fight armed opponents. Still Shouta knew something was bothering the kid.

At the end of patrol the two of them landed on a rooftop, Wraith immediatley fell into a practiced fighting stance, still a little slower than Shouta would have liked, but it was a start, but whatever was throwing them off earlier was clearly still a distraction. The kid had gotten even better at dodging, even if they still couldn't land a hit on him, but today they just kept getting pinned by the same moves they were dodging with ease yesterday. Shouta stopped the spar abruptly, "whats wrong Wraith?"

Izuku was panicking, Eraser had noticed something, what gave them away? "Nothings wrong" they signed, hoping that the hero would give it up, but they werent so lucky.

"Kid, you've been acting strange all day, don't try to act like you're fine".

"Really, nothing's wrong" by the glare they got it was clear that Eraser wasn't going to belive that, so Izuku changed tactics "you don't have to worry about it"

Eraser sighed tiredly, Izuku tensed, nothing good came of people being annoyed by them, "you know you can tell me if something happened, I'm not going to be mad or anything". Goddamn it, why did he have to sound so genuine? Izuku silently willed themself not to cry in front of the hero

"I swear, it really wasn't that bad, it was probably for the best anyways" they started pacing around frantically as they tried to convince Eraser that nothing was wrong, and that he shouldn't worry about it.

Shouta shook his head, *'this kid'* he thought as they continued pacing around, signing so frantically that he was having trouble figuring out what they were saying. While they were pacing, a piece of paper drifted out of their hoodie, it looked like a mildly burnt notebook page. Shouta picked it up to give it back to Wraith, and hopefully snap the kid out of whatever spiral they were going throug, when he

noticed his hero name on the top of the page. It looked like an analysis of his quirk, with notes about how it affects his fighting style written in the margins, overal, it was rather accurate, the hypothesies were clearly labeled, some right some wrong, it was the kind of stuff expected from the third years at UA. “Kid, did you write this?” he asked showing them the piece of paper.

Izuku paused as their eyes immediatley focused on the notebook page in Eraser’s hand, and the panick they’d felt earlier hit them again full force, *’oh no, he’s going to think its creepy, and then he’ll be mad and-’*

Eraser was saying, soemthing, Izuku couldn’t quite make it out past the sound of their own heartbeat pounding in their ears, he vaguely sounded concerned and Izuku realised that they’d started crying, they silently cursed their traitorous tear ducts as they desperatley tried to control their breathing.

Shouta didn’t quite know what to do, yes he knew how to help with a panic attack but Wraith didn’t seem to be hearing anything he said. They seemed to be calming down though, and after some time their breathing returned to normal

After a few seconds of silence they started shakilly signing ”I’m sorry, I know the notes are really creepy and dumb and weird and-” The kid continued to sign but with their shaky hands it was impossible to make out what they were trying to say.

”What do you mean, ‘creepy’? This looks like a pretty good analysis to me.” At that, Wraith’s head shot up.

”What do you mean? everyone thinks its creepy!”

”And everyone is wrong, this is valuable information to know about people, not to mention its pretty good, and most of the stuff here is correct”.

Wraith seemed to be confused, understandably so, since they’d been told that their analysis was creepy (Shouta wanted to find everyone who said that and wring their necks for how stupid they were), they clearly weren’t expecting him to say otherwise. ”My, ‘friend’, he said that it was creepy and should be destroyed” they reached into their pocket and took out two other pages.

”Your friend sounds more like a bully to me” Shouta made note of the burn marks on each page “did he cause those burn marks?”.

”Yeah, these are the only pages I managed to save from that notebook” Wraith had started shaking again ”he said that the book was stupid and useless, like me”.

Shouta had to suppress his rage at that, where the hell were any adults when this happened!? “He said *what*?” Wraith shrunk in on themselves at that and Shouta had to take a breath to calm down “sorry, I’m not mad at you, I'm angry at your friend” Wraith slightly relaxed, seemingly reassured that Shouta was being genuine. “Where were your parents? Didn’t they stop him?”

Wraith shook their head, ”we were at school, and before you ask, the teachers wouldn’t have done anything, they might have encouraged him. It's fine, I mean, I can take a hit, and it’s not like I’m worth anything anyways.”

Shouta felt rage at that, what kind of teacher would do such a thing!? He’d only been teaching for a year by now, but every other teacher he knew would rather face a hundred villains than let one of their students get bullied like this, for someone to *encourage* it? If he ever met Wraith’s teachers he was going to tear them apart. The second half of that sentence was also rather worrying, “kid, why on earth would you think that you’re not worth anything!?”

Izuku froze, shit, why did they say that? There was no-way out of this corner, and, part of them knew what was going to happen next, but still, another part desperatley wanted to keep playing this charade, even though there was no-way they’d be able to talk themselves out of this one.

They took a deep breath and tensed, ready to run away at the first sign of hostility

”I’m quirkless

Quirkless

The first thing that went through Shouta’s mind were the statistics, quirkless kids were almost always abused or neglected at home, they were suicide baited on average twice a day, and the statistics for actual suicide were alarming, that combined with the murder statistics meant that only about one in fifty kids ever made it past fifteen. And those are old statistics, from a few generations back, when quirklessness was more common, they didn’t have any statistics for the newer generations, no-one cared to find out, Shouta knew it was

worse.

Wraith seemed to be ready to flee, like they expected Shouta to hate them like everyone else.

”So? You’re still human, you don’t deserve to be treated like that.”

Izuku stared at the hero, both confused and still anxious, there was no way that he actually belived that, right? He was just messing with them? ”But, I’m *useless* it would be a favour to the world if I ended up dead.”

”Kid, listen to me, you aren’t useless just because you don’t have a quirk, a lot of people don’t even use their quirk through their life.” Izuku thought about it for a second, that was true, they hadn’t even thought about it that way. They really could live a normal life without a quirk, but, they didn’t want a normal life, they wanted an impossible dream, they had one question they wanted to ask.

”Eraser? Do, do you think someone like me could be a hero?

Shouta paused at that question, could someone quirkless be a hero? Shouta didn’t know the exact answer to that, there’d never beem a quirkless hero before, but, did that mean it was impossible? Shouta thought about it a bit more, if a quirkless person ever did become a hero, they’d have to work a lot harder, they’d need skill to compensate, a lot of support gear probably, not to mention even with that, they’d most likely have to stay underground or at the lowest end of the rankings. But maybe…

Izuku got more and more nervous as the silence continued untill finally Eraser spoke.

”Why do you want to be a hero?”

Izuku felt dissapointment and acceptance flood them ”I know its unreasonable but-“

”I didn’t say anything about that, I just asked why you want to be a hero.”

Izuku paused at that, surely he didn’t actually want the answer? ”I want to be a hero so I can help people, so I can make sure people don’t have to be hurt and suffer”

”Even if you never make it far in the rankings? And even if you’ll have

to work ten times harder than anyone with a quirk?"

Izuku felt a surge of determination at that "yes, I don't care about the rankings, and I know I'd have to work much harder than most people, but I would do it if it meant I could help people"

Eraser smiled, a rare expression on the man, "then I don't see why you couldn't be a hero, with the right training"

Izuku felt themselves start to cry, Eraserhead thought that they could be a hero! Without thinking they hugged the hero, they mildly panicked, ready to appologize, but before they could let go they felt two arms wrapping around them in a hug, the sense of safety brought even more tears to their face.

Shouta hugged the crying vigilante tightly, if they were anyone else he'd have pushed them off by now, but he had to admit, he'd gotten attached to the vigilante, no, *kid*, this was a kid, a kid who everyone has hurt, and one that desperatley needed someone to believe in them. Shouta let them cry into his shirt.

Even after Wraith had stopped crying neither of them moved for a few minutes, Shouta didn't mind.

Izuku let go after what felt like forever, even then they were reluctant to let go from the warmth, "sorry, I didn't mean to do that"

"Don't apologize kid, its fine. Still, I don't think I finished explaining"

Izuku felt their face heat up in embarrasment "sorry"

Eraser just shook his head "quit saying sorry kid, its not your fault." Izuku tried to sign another sorry but a glare from the hero stopped them "I was going to say that I could train you, if you think you're up for it?"

Izuku nodded vigorously "yes, of course, I'll do whatever it takes!"

"Good, we'll start tomorrow"

"Alright! I promise, I'll work as hard as possible so that I'll be ready!" Wraith was nodding so fast that Shouta was half worried that their head might fall off, and he was sure they were grinning brightly underneath that mask.

Shouta sighed internally, he could already tell this was going to be

migrane inducing. But Wraith was practically bouncing with energy. Shouta smiled, hiding his face with the capture weapon so that no-one could see, this kid was just so precious, how could anyone hurt them? Shouta swore to himself that he was going to make sure no-one ever hurt his the kid again.

Chapter End Notes

Dadzawa now know Izuku is quirkless, and he's gonna train them to be a hero! Next chapter's gonna be that first training session.

Fun fact, this was originally going to be two chapters but I decided that I didn't want to be that cruel to you guys so I smushed it all into one chapter, which is why this one is twice as long as the others.

Chapter 11: Start with the basics

Chapter Summary

The first lesson.
The beginnings of DadMic and Aizawa completely denying being a parent.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV Switch
Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku grumbled sleepily as the sun shined into the warehouse, waking them up rather abruptly, it seemed that they'd slept in, not a common occurrence, but last night had been an exhausting time. Izuku almost believed that it had been a dream, but the half burnt notebook pages that lay next to them proved otherwise. Honestly, they still couldn't believe it, Eraserhead knew they were quirkless, and instead of abandoning them, he'd still cared, he even thought that they could be a hero if they worked hard enough, he offered to train them! Part of them still wondered if this was a cruel trick, if after all this Eraser would still turn his back on them. But they knew that they had to hope, hope that this truly was their chance, that they really could become a hero. And today was going to be their first day of training, Izuku knew that being a hero was more than knowing how to punch bad guys, so they were curious as to what would be added to their combat lessons and what was going to be completely new to them. Of course that was for the afternoon, for now they decided to relax, which was basically impossible so instead they sighed and figured that going for a jog would be a better idea.

Shouta paced the length of the living room, over and over, and over again, Hizashi watched him from the couch "Moonlight, you still haven't entirely told me what's going on, and you're going to wear out the carpet at this rate".

"Wraith is quirkless"

"Wait, quirkless?" Hizashi thought that he had surely misheard, even with his hearing aids in, he must have missed something. Quirkless? It was almost unheard of for a kid these days to be quirkless. But Shouta

nodded, confirming what should have been an impossibility. The kid was probably being bullied, or even abused at home, Hizashi knew the statistics purely because of his husband's work, and he didn't know all of them, but still. "Is the little listener okay?".

"No, they're being hurt at school, and apparently the teachers are *encouraging* it" the last bit was spat out with fury, and Hizashi felt a similar way.

"So Wraith's not just a vigilante, they're a quirkless child too, that's concerning, but I still don't see why you've been stressing out since you got back last night".

"They want to be a hero" Hizashi internally sighed, all kids wanted to be heroes, but he didn't know if a quirkless person could even be a hero. Something on his expression must have shown his hesitance because his husband interrupted him before he could say anything, "I know, it's never been done before, but that kid's determined, and, well, they know how difficult it would be for them, and I agreed to train them."

"What." Hizashi had to do a double take on that "*you* agreed to teach a child, younger than our students, how to be a hero? You of all people?" He honestly couldn't imagine his grumpy husband actively volunteering to do any kind of work dealing with children, then again Shouta always was a softie.

A glare from Shouta was enough to shut him up "I know, but the kid needs all the help they can get, and this way I can make sure they don't get hurt being a vigilante not to mention that *someone* has to be a responsible adult in their life" Hizashi wanted to laugh at the last comment, Shouta was far from responsible, the man was an insomniac caffeine addict who slept in a sleeping bag.

It was odd how concerned Shouta was, it was not in the way that he would normally be concerned about a civilian, it was almost like a concerned parent. Hizashi grinned "so when were you going to tell me you were such a dad?". Shouta froze on the spot, processing the words before glaring full force at Hizashi.

"I am not a 'dad' Zashi"

"Then why are you acting like one? Come on Shou, do I need to get some adoption papers or something?" Hizashi had to hold back laughter as his husband tried to argue back, "I'm kidding, *mostly*."

Shouta grumbled, and started pacing again, “Wraith is not my kid, but that isn’t the point here, I just hope I can teach them everything they need to know.”

Hizashi sighed and pulled his husband onto the couch with him to stop him from moving “relax dear, you just have to teach them the same way you’re teaching the 1A students. not to mention you’ve got years to prepare the kid for high school. And if you need help, I’m always here, and I’m sure Nemuri would love to teach this kid.”

”I guess you’re right”

”Of course I am” Hizashi paused “so when can I meet them?”

Shouta looked caught off guard at the question “I don’t know, I- I could ask them I guess”

Hizashi grinned brightly “yes! I can’t wait to meet our kid!”

”Not our kid”

”Whatever you say dear”

Izuku felt jittery as they ran down the alleyways to the fire escape that led to the rooftop where Eraser was probably waiting for them, this was it, their chance to be a hero! They quickly and quietly scaled the fire escape, it appeared that Eraser hadn’t shown up yet, but they wouldn’t count out a surprise attack to start the training, so they stayed alert and searched the roof for any signs that the hero was there, nothing, it seemed that he really was running late, that was odd. Izuku wandered around the rooftop kicking stones as they waited, unable to sit still.

Finally, soft footfalls alerted them to someone’s presence, and they turned around as Eraser landed on the roof. ”Hey Eraser!”

Eraser nodded at them “Wraith, sorry I’m late, I had to take a detour”, he reached into his scarf and pulled out, a notebook? How was he keeping that in there? Before Izuku could ponder *that* oddity, Eraser continued talking “since your last one got destroyed, I figured you could use a new one” it was a thick notebook with a plain black cover. Izuku took the book, holding it carefully as if it was a prized treasure. “Anyways, are you ready for your first heroics lesson?”

Izuku nodded ”Yes Eraser-Sensei!”

”You can call me Aizawa, I’m your teacher now, you don’t have to use my hero name” Izuku’s eyes widened, and they nodded vigorously, and they were about to correct their statement when they paused. Eras- *Aizawa* seemed to realize the issue quickly “right, my sign name” he did the sign for the letter S followed by the sign for cat. Izuku was surprised he even had a sign name, and why the sign for cat?

”Okay Aizawa-Sensei!” Izuku signed, practically bouncing on the spot.

”Alright” he grinned, and oh boy that was terrifying, “let’s begin,” Izuku immediately dropped into a defensive stance, but an attack didn’t come, still, by now they knew better than to drop their guard. “Good, your reaction times are getting better, try and hit me” Izuku was only momentarily hesitant before throwing a punch (an actual punch now, that had been the first thing Aizawa had taught them) at Aizawa. He dodged and stood still “try again”, Izuku did, a few times, and then Aizawa started lecturing them, “your punches need to be quicker, and you’re not thinking this through”. Izuku was starting to get annoyed, but stopped for a moment and thought about it, they couldn’t hit Aizawa head on, but what else could they do? They saw the hero reaching for his capture weapon, so they shook their head and continued trying to attack the hero while they thought. They couldn’t physically beat the hero, but they didn’t need to beat him, they just needed to land a single punch. They thought back to their notebooks, some of the weaknesses listed didn’t apply to them, but there was one. Izuku backed off and waited for Aizawa to attack them, after a few moments he obliged, they were used to dodging his attacks by now. This may have been a mistake, since they still needed to find an opening which was a rare thing, it was a good hour before such an opportunity arose, they dodged a kick and grabbed some of the gravel and dust from the roof and threw it at the hero’s face. Izuku had created a very small opening in which Aizawa was temporarily blinded, so they took it and managed to get a single finger on the hero’s leg before being pinned down by the hero.

Aizawa paused and released them “well, you didn’t quite manage to hit me, but you did manage to touch me, which is more than I expected.” He sat down at the edge of the roof and gestured for them to sit down as well.

”You were going easy on me. You could have pinned me much quicker if you were using your capture weapon”

”Well, you’re still a kid, and you just started learning how to fight,

and even if that's not everything you need to learn, your stealth and agility are what allowed you to avoid me the first few months that I was chasing you, and I wasn't holding back then"

"I guess you're right"

"You really need some self-confidence huh?"

"Well, you're the only person who believes in me, how do I know you're not wrong?"

"Well, I know at least one other person who believes in you, hell, he's been wanting to meet you for a while now" Izuku's head whipped around to stare at Aizawa, who snorted at the reaction "my husband has been pestering me about whether he could help train you"

"Husband?" Izuku honestly couldn't picture the tough and scary Eraserhead having any kind of relationship, let alone being married!

"Got a problem with that?" Izuku shook their head quickly, "good."

"So, he wants to meet me? And how can he help me train, unless he's also a hero… You're married to another hero?" Izuku asked, Aizawa only nodded as conformation. "Who?

"I'll give you a hint, he's known for being very loud."

The possibilities raced through Izuku's mind, being loud? Maybe a voice quirk, there were a few. It had to be a male hero, and he was probably located in Musutafu, which meant only one person. "P-r-e-s-e-n-t M-i-c?" they had to fingerspell his name since they didn't have a sign name for him, and they didn't think that just using the sign for microphone would get their point across.

"Yeah, Present Mic"

"He wants to help train me?"

Aizawa nodded "if you're alright with that" and Izuku felt their inner fanboy jump and squeal at the idea.

"Yes, absolutely, I can't believe it he's such a cool hero" Izuku's brain went on overdrive as they started listing out every way that Present Mic was an incredible hero.

Shouta shook his head at the antics, he knew the kid knew a lot about

heroes but actually seeing that knowledge was amusing to watch. Hizashi was going to be stoked to find out that the kid was such a fan of him.

Eventually it started getting much darker and Shouta had to remind Wraith to get back to their home, he didn't bother trying to follow them, they'd probably lose him pretty quickly, still, he was worried about the kid, their parents probably neglected them, but without Wraith's identity (he was not going to make them tell him) he couldn't do anything, but still, he wasn't going to tell Hizashi about that, Shouta knew he'd start making jokes about Shouta being Wraith's dad, which was false, there was no way, Wraith was his student, not his child. Not at all.

Chapter End Notes

First lesson complete!
Next: another dad acquisition

Memes:
Aizawa: Wraith is the most precious child I've ever met, they deserve the world and I would fight god for them.
Also Aizawa: What? Im absolutely not a dad.
Meanwhile
Hizashi: *hasn't even met Wraith*
Also Hizashi: That's our kid now.

Chapter 12: Another dad?

Chapter Summary

> Wraith is both smart and adorable. And Hizashi is already attached.

Chapter Notes

> --- : POV switch
> Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku rushed down the alleyways, their bright yellow backpack, filled with their notebook, pencils and a bottle of water, bouncing as they jumped over trash and veered around corners. They were headed towards their rooftop, it had been a week and a half since the first lesson and Izuku was getting much better at combat. Plus they were learning about the law, since that was important to being a good hero. Stuff about heroes, villains and vigilantes and the difference, legally speaking, as well as the restrictions on quirk usage, something that didn't really apply to them, but Aizawa-sensei had insisted that it was necessary. He had tried to help with their analyses, but just because you can do something doesn't mean you can teach it to others, Izuku was still happy that they could even *talk* about their analyses to someone.

They got to the rooftop and waiting up there was Aizawa and, was that Present Mic!? He wasn't facing them but there was no mistaking that hairstyle. Izuku knew that he had wanted to meet them, they also knew from their mentor's complaining that his schedule didn't really allow enough free time to do so. They could also hear Present Mic talking, from the other end of the roof, Aizawa looked like he was already regretting bringing him here.

The second they moved Izuku saw Aizawa look towards them, and quickly turn away, hiding his face in his scarf. What was that about? They walked up to the pair. Present Mic was still turned away from them.

"Sho, why are you smiling?" Present Mic asked suspiciously, Aizawa only shrugged.

Izuku had gotten used to the fact that Aizawa could hear them no-

matter what they did, so they didn't entirely expect to catch anyone off guard, so when they stepped into view, they certainly didn't expect the shriek that cut through the air, quickly quietened by a quirked glare from Aizawa, who seemed annoyed. Although Izuku got the feeling that he hadn't acknowledged them just to mess with Present Mic.

"Hi Sensei, you brought Mic with you?" Izuku tilted their head at the voice hero.

"Hey little listener! It's great to finally meet ya! The name's Yamada Hizashi" Yamada grinned and Izuku had to turn away from the sheer brightness of it. How on earth was *this* Aizawa's husband?

"Nice to meet you Yamada-san, Aizawa-sensei talks about you a lot" Izuku was sure that they were bouncing in place right now.

"Aww, Sho, why didn't you tell me Wraith was this precious?" Yamada was still smiling, 'precious'? Izuku didn't think that was right, but they soaked in the praise anyway.

They heard a familiar whooshing sound and quickly dodged the capture weapon which was trying to wrap their arms. "Alright, let's get to training" Aizawa looked at the two with a tired expression and sighed "Zashi, don't pout, you can talk to them after."

Hizashi was internally squealing as he talked to Wraith, the little listener seemed so nervous and excited all at once that he wondered how they hadn't exploded with all that energy. Of course he'd been hearing about Wraith since his husband first started working on the case, but seeing them in person was just so exciting. And he had been wondering how the kid would behave, when Shouta had first agreed to train Wraith he mentioned that the kid needed a confidence boost. Hizashi had expected the shy politeness, but he certainly hadn't expected that to continue into their sparring, Wraith spent most of their time dodging, almost always hesitating when going in for a hit, sure it was only half a second, but that's a lot of time in a fight.

Still, they were doing remarkably well against Shouta, it had been at least three minutes before they got wrapped up in the capture weapon. Hizashi half expected Wraith to take some time before starting the spar again, but they were immediately back on their feet and clearly very focused on their task. Hizashi was sure that they were completely focused on the battle, like a lot of the heroics students he expected that situational awareness, even while fighting, was a skill

that Shouta would have to teach them later, but surprisingly he noticed that, no-matter where he moved around the edge of the roof, Wraith specifically avoided moving to that area. They must have been keeping track of his movements as well, Hizashi felt both proud and incredibly sad, proud because that was a difficult skill to master, and sad for the circumstances that could possibly force a *literal child* to learn how to track people like that.

Izuku scrambled as they tried to get out of the capture scarf, Aizawa was just watching them with amusement, and they couldn't see Yamada's face, but they saw his shoulders shaking as he tried to hide his laughter. Eventually they stopped struggling and let Aizawa untangle them, that was probably the longest spar yet! Even if they were still nowhere close to being able to actually hit Aizawa.

Izuku had expected Aizawa to start his usual lectures on both the various branches of heroics, and the laws they abide by. Instead Yamada sat down next to them.

"Hey little listener. Shou told me that you do analysis, could I see one?" Izuku was a bit hesitant, they'd only just gotten that new notebook, but there were already quite a few entries, mostly the analyses that had been lost when Bakugo blew up their old notebook. The little white square on the front cover now had neat kanji written on it, Analysis #8, and Izuku was quite careful with this one, not wanting another incident. They really didn't want something to happen to it and giving it to someone else was just asking for trouble, but the reasonable part of their mind insisted that Aizawa's husband wouldn't do something like that. So they hesitantly opened their bag and gave Yamada the notebook, nervously fiddling with their fingers as he read.

Hizashi flipped through the pages, reading quickly since it was apparent that the kid was nervous about giving him the book, Shouta had told him that they were good, but seeing it in front of him was certainly something. Most of the analyses consisted of two pages, one which was just filled with a jumbled stream of thought that barely made any sense, and another one that was much more organized and readable. The organized pages followed a clear pattern, Hero name and quirk details were written at the top along with a short description of the hero's notable characteristics usually accompanied by a nice drawing of the hero in question. Underneath that there was a bullet point list of possible uses to their quirk as well as a few hypotheses on the details of how the quirk exactly worked. There was also a list of weaknesses and ways to possibly neutralize the hero.

Ranging from using fire or herbicide against a plant based hero to cutting off the hands of a hero with a contact quirk, it was all rather impressive.

”This is great little listener!” Hizashi said as he read the entry on Prism, a hero with the ability to turn manipulate light into various weapons or simply use it like a laser. While the weaknesses listed included nighttime and closed spaces, one of the suggestions for permanently neutralizing her was to put her in a cell underground so that there was no chance of any light reaching her. Noting that if she even had the smallest bit of light she would be able to cut through any bindings. The hypotheses were also interesting to look at, wondering if she controlled light though manipulating the waves and if so, could she possibly change the colour of objects or cause illusions by messing with the wavelength and amplitude to alter people’s sight. There were notes on how she used a very direct fighting style with a heavy reliance on her quirk as well as how exactly her quirk influences the way she fights. Still, there was something missing, Hizashi hadn’t worked with Prism at all, but he knew that she was arrogant, and he suspected she never really had a plan for anything. But there was no notes on anything like that, despite the fact that her personality meant that she was incredibly easy to goad into a fight, surely the kid hadn’t missed it? Not when they’d noticed so much else.

”Wraith, are these all your notes on Prism?”

Izuku was surprised by the question but nodded.

”Well, you seemed to have missed a pretty big weakness, her personality” Izuku tilted their head, personality? How was that a weakness?

”What do you mean?"

”Well, she’s kind of arrogant, she always acts like the fight is already won for her, meaning that it would be really easy to catch her off guard or lure her into a false sense of security before hitting her with something she wouldn’t be prepared to defend against. And it’s not just a bad traits that you can take advantage of, despite her arrogance she always prioritizes civilian safety, anyone who’s looking to take her down could throw her off by making sure to endanger civilian lives, like taking down a building or causing a fire, maybe even a hostage situation. She’d be too distracted with rescue that she wouldn’t notice any attempts you made to kill her.”

Izuku nodded along as Yamada explained how important knowing your enemy's personality could be. They hadn't realized you could do so much with that aspect of a person. And maybe it was just a little bit validating to hear someone go through a similar thought process to them, maybe they were talking about murder, but they weren't actually going to follow through on the plans.

"She's also really underutilizing her quirk, she really only manipulates one bit of light at a time, but I've seen that she can do much more than that, considering that she can create multiple weapons, it would be reasonable to assume that she could make a barrage of tiny knives if she wanted to."

Shouta watched from the side of the roof as Wraith and Hizashi continued to talk about the various ways one could kill a hero like Prism. It was getting progressively more implausible as they went on, at some point Wraith had suggested using something that blocks light like a blackout curtain to stop her from seeing the light meaning that she wouldn't be able to control it. Hizashi had responded by pointing out that blindfolding her would have the same effect. To which Wraith had countered that it would be really difficult to get close enough to do that, but if she was already unable to fight back that would be a good way of neutralizing her.

Shouta felt the beginnings of a headache as the both of them switched topics to another hero, it was getting late, also he was mildly afraid of whatever chaos he had unleashed by letting the two of them meet. Not that he regretted it, the kid was clearly very happy to have one more person to talk to. Shouta smiled to himself.

Still they needed to get back home if either of them wanted to get any sleep, so he called Hizashi over and said bye to Wraith, Hizashi promised that he'd try to show up to trainings more often. Which made the kid bounce with joy.

After they'd gotten home Hizashi had immediately started talking about how amazing Wraith was.

"They're so smart Shou, and they were so eager to learn" Hizashi grinned "no wonder you got so attached to the kid, they are so sweet! You were right though, their confidence could use some work, but that's why I'm here!" at this point his husband was practically dancing around the room "our kid is amazing!"

"First of all, they're not our kid-"

”Yet!”

”No, second of all, I noticed that you were really happy with their analyses, I’ve really only read a few of them, but they seem impressive considering that they’ve never been taught how to do that. Imagine what they could do with proper guidance.”

Hizashi nodded before looking mildly concerned “Shou, you realize the only person who’d willingly teach them analysis is Nedzu, right?” and Shouta paled, well there was a thought, Nezu teaching a child, that could only end in disaster, or world domination.

”We are *not* letting that happen.”

”It’s Nezu, he’ll find out eventually”

”Why? it’s not like we could be connected to the kid in any way.”

”Yet.” Hizashi smiled at him “I know that the second that you find the kid’s identity you’re going to try to adopt them. Admit it, you’re their dad now.”

Shouta rolled his eyes “not true, I’m their *teacher*.”

”One of these days you’ll see that I’m right.”

Chapter End Notes

> Apologies for the late upload, yesterday was Sinhala New Years and I was busy celebrating with my family.
>
> Aizawa's still in denial. I wonder how long until that changes. Meanwhile Hizashi is fully ready to adopt their kid.
>
> Izuku is still kind of cautious around both of them, it would be a real shame if something forced them to reveal their identity ;>

Chapter 13: Oh no.

Chapter Summary

Izuku has a bad time.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

Warnings for Bakugo, and major injury

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Over the last month and a half Izuku had slowly gotten accustomed to their new routine, wake up, go to school, survive school, go to the warehouse, change into vigilante outfit, go to the rooftop, train with Aizawa and sometimes Yamada, patrol with Aizawa, go home, sleep, rinse and repeat. Their notebook was now filling up with new entries, along with revisions on old entries, and in the margins they sometimes wrote stories Yamada would tell them about the heroes he'd worked with. Their combat skills were also majorly improving, each spar now usually lasted about five minutes, and they even managed to hit back a few times! And Aizawa had drilled them on all kinds of police procedures, to the point where they could recite several heroics laws with ease, or, as easily as someone *could* answer a pop quiz in the middle of a fight. Patrols had also been pretty calm, maybe it was the fact that Aizawa had stopped watching them like a hawk the entire time, trusting that they could handle themself fairly well. On the other hand they were still not allowed to actually help in the fights against armed opponents, which was infuriating, if only because they had to watch Aizawa get hurt more than they would have liked. They could still say they'd helped stopped quite a few fistfights lately. They could say with confidence that the time spent with the two heroes was the most enjoyment they'd had since, well, ever! Aizawa was a strict teacher, but he was fair, and underneath all the grumpiness he was soft and caring, even if he showed it in odd ways. Yamada on the other hand was the complete opposite, bubbly and bright, always a goofball, but he had a heart of fire, and they were sure he'd raze the earth to protect the ones he cared about. The concern that both of them had for Izuku was nice, it gave them a warm fuzzy feeling that they couldn't quite place.

Izuku snapped themself out of their thoughts as they heard the school bell, they were sitting in class, the last one of the day, and they had zoned out in the middle of it. In their defense it was mathematics, and this was the fourth time someone had asked a dumb question. As Muto-sensei begrudgingly re-explained the basics of algebra to the class, Izuku was daydreaming about training, they probably shouldn't be doing that, but honestly, they had understood the concept the first time and they were just killing time.

They ran out of the classroom, bracing themself for any stray quirks that the other students would send their way. They had been having a much easier time avoiding people (thank you stealth training) and they managed to get out of the main doors before something happened.

"Deku!"

That something being Bakugo.

They sighed as they turned around to face Bakugo, ready to face whatever the beating of the day would be. However, they certainly couldn't have expected Bakugo to grab them by the arm and demand answers for, something.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing?"

"What?"

"Don't play dumb with me Deku, no-one can find you outside of class! How the fuck are you doing that you shitty Deku!? And I know that it's not your shitty rooftop spot, I checked." Bakugo was pulling tighter and tighter on Izuku's arm.

Izuku froze, the reason was the stealth training they were doing with Aizawa, but they couldn't say that. "I've been practicing?" They said, but something about their response must have tipped him off.

"There's no-way you got that good by yourself! A shitty Deku like you could never be that good, someone's helping you! Who the fuck is it? Huh?"

Izuku was stuck, they couldn't exactly say that they were being trained by a pro hero, but Bakugo was smart, he would see through any lie they tried. So they settled for a half truth. "Someone who just wanted to help me!"

Bakugo snarled at the vague answer, “well whoever they are must be stupid to help a useless Deku! What kind of stupid motherfucker are they? I bet they’re just as weak and pathetic as you!”

Now, Izuku could count the number of times they’d ever gotten angry on one hand. First, when they were thrown out, a mixture of hurt, scared and angry had been what kept them alive that night. Another time, the first time Bakugo had hurt them, they had been too young to have the depressing lack of self-esteem they currently possess. And lastly, the first time someone had called them useless. All of these times were long before they’d started training with Aizawa and Yamada, who were very insistent that the way they were being treated was horrible, and they were starting to believe it. Izuku wouldn’t say they’d started being angry after that, no it was more like, annoyance, in the way you get annoyed at a dog barking, you know they can’t help it, and you wouldn’t fault the dog for barking, but you still find it irritating. Which was certainly different than complete and utter acceptance, and it was, according to Aizawa, better. All that to say, it was a complete surprise, even to themself, when they punched Bakugo in the face.

Bakugo reached a hand up to his nose, and his fingers became wet with blood. He stared at the crimson liquid for a few seconds, seconds that Izuku should have used to run away, but they were *pissed*. How *dare* he even suggest that! Their mentor was anything *close* to weak or pathetic!

Bakugo snapped out of his stupor and his face contorted into an ugly snarl as he leaped at Izuku, hands outstretched as explosions set off in his palms. Izuku dodged with ease, Bakugo was like a fumbling baby compared to Aizawa, and Izuku could hold their own against him. Bakugo stood no chance. Izuku dodged another swipe, kneeing Bakugo in the gut causing him to double over in pain. They took the chance to try and run, of course, they hadn’t accounted for the commotion that the altercation would cause. Several students were now surrounding the pair, and others were trying to help Bakugo, Izuku was surrounded and there was no-way they could escape what was about to happen. Bakugo stalked towards them, arms raised and explosions crackling. Izuku was now running like a caged rabbit, trying desperately to avoid Bakugo’s attacks, which would have been easy, had it not been for various other students also trying to trip them up. They noticed that a few teachers had also come to watch and they did nothing, despair started clouding in their mind. Eventually, they slipped up, someone managed to grab them, and suddenly they were being barraged from all sides. Pain bloomed across their body as

they were pinned helplessly. They wondered if they would even make it out of this alive.

It had been twenty minutes past their usual time and Wraith *still* hadn't shown up, and Shouta had already begun searching the nearby alleyways for the kid. A part of him was desperately hoping the kid had just forgotten or was running late because they got detention. But as twenty minutes turned into thirty, then forty, then fifty and then an hour, Shouta couldn't deny that something truly terrible must have happened to the kid. He first checked the area's near the rooftop, but after that was unsuccessful, he started going out in a single direction for a few blocks before doubling back to the rooftop to make sure Wraith hadn't gone there. After the fourth search desperation took over and he started being more frantic in his search, investigating every little noise, hoping to catch even a glimpse of Wraith, worst case scenarios already playing out in his mind.

He had just completed what had to have been the tenth search, this one was closer to the nastier part of town, and was going to head back to the rooftop when he heard shuffling in an alleyway, odds were that this was another cat, but Shouta's panicked mind couldn't care less, if there was even a chance it was them, he had to check.

Inside the alley Shouta looked around, there appeared to be no-one, but then more shuffling sounded from behind the dumpster. Shouta took a look and almost gasped when he saw an unconscious child, maybe eight or nine years old, their hair was matted by deep red blood, they were wearing what looked to be an elementary school uniform, also soaked with blood. Shouta immediately started gently shaking them, trying to wake the child up.

Eventually the child opened their eyes, they stared past him initially.

"Hey, can you hear me?"

Their eyes focused a little at the sound of his voice. And their eyes quickly snapped completely open when they saw him.

"Hey, kid, I'm not going to hurt you, I-" he was cut off by the kid raising their hands.

"Aizawa-sensei?"

Shouta froze. *'No, no way. No. No.* ***No.'*** "Wraith?"

The kid, *his* kid, nodded.

Shouta had to resist the urge to envelop them in a hug. Relief and terror flooding his brain at the same time. Shouta picked them up in his arms and started walking through the back alleys, trying to go as fast as possible without further hurting his kid. “Okay, kid, I need you to stay awake, okay? Let’s get you to the hospital.” Wraith’s eyes widened and they tried to shake their head. “Kid, please, you’re bleeding out, we need to get you medical attention!”

Wraith managed to move their hands long enough to sign ”won’t help, quirkless”

Shouta felt rage simmering under his skin as he realized that they were right, no hospital was going to treat a quirkless child, even if they were dying. “Okay, no hospitals, but I have a co-worker who would be willing to help.” Shuzenji was not someone he talked to a lot, but her contact was in his phone, and she was the only other option he could think of. “We’d have to go to my apartment” he said already calling Hizashi’s number. Wraith nodded and then winced when the action caused their injuries to be aggravated.

After about fifteen seconds, which were fifteen seconds too long in Shouta’s mind, Hizashi finally picked up the phone. “Hey Shou! What’s up?”

”I’m sending you my location, get in the car and get over here as fast as you can.”

”Wait what, Shouta? What’s going on? Are you okay?” The concern in his husband’s voice would have been comforting if Shouta wasn’t currently holding a dying child.

”Wraith is hurt, really badly, can’t go to a hospital, call RG and tell her to meet us at our apartment”

”Shit, okay, I’ll be there as soon as I can”

Hizashi had barely enough time call Recovery Girl and tell her the basic details of the situation before he was in the car and driving to where Shouta was, probably breaking a few laws in the process, thankfully he got there in only seventeen minutes. Shouta quickly got in the back seat with a child, *‘that must be Wraith’*. He had to drive a little slower on the way back, not wanting to risk worsening Wraith’s injuries, so the drive home took about twenty minutes. Each second felt like an eternity.

By the time they got back to their apartment Wraith was barely

conscious. And it felt like another eternity until Recovery Girl showed up. In the meantime Shouta had done his best to try and stop the bleeding, but there was still a lot of blood.

Shuzenji checked over the kid as quickly as she could, growing more and more horrified by the second, as she uncovered lacerations, burns, stab wounds, and a broken rib. “Well, I can’t heal much, but I can just about stabilize them, the rest is gonna take time.” She said, giving Wraith a small kiss on the forehead, and bandaging up the wounds that didn’t heal “call me when they have a bit more energy and I can heal them up completely, got it?” she said sternly. Hizashi and Shouta nodded, both silently praying that their kid would be okay. But there was nothing they could do except wait.

Chapter End Notes

> Uh oh, its a cliffhanger!
> sorry, I would have put it in one part but that was just too long. Besides, I like seeing you all suffer/lh
>
> Anyways, I promise Izuku will be mostly okay, physically at least, mentally? That's a whole other story.

Chapter 14: Izuku finally gets to be happy.

Chapter Summary

Well, here's the part two.
Izuku, Aizawa and Yamada have a talk about where to go from here.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue
Signed and Spoken Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It took about an hour of both of them keeping watch over Wraith before Hizashi suggested that they take shifts, it wouldn't do to have both of them be dead tired when the kid woke up. Begrudgingly Shouta had agreed, although he still insisted on taking the first shift, he had to make sure the kid wasn't going to get worse. Hizashi agreed and went to bed, reminding Shouta to wake him up in an hour, Shouta almost retorted that he obviously would, before realizing that he probably wouldn't, not with the kid's current state, not if he could just keep watch the entire night. Still, an hour later he woke up Hizashi and went to sleep, only after triple checking that his husband would wake him up if anything happened.

"Okay, I get it, really Moonlight, if *anything* happens to our kid, I'll wake you up".

"They're not our-" Shouta stopped himself, who was he kidding, Wraith was their kid, only emotionally for now, but Hizashi had been right, the second he got an identity for Wraith, he was adopting them, if they were alright with it of course. He knew they had to at least get legal guardianship of the kid, whatever home they were in was clearly unfit for a child, and given how horrible the foster system usually was, never mind the quirkless aspect, they weren't going to let the kid get put in the system.

Hizashi smiled at him knowingly "Just get some sleep dear. And try not to worry too much?"

That advice was completely disregarded of course. No matter how hard he tried he couldn't get the image of his kid's battered and

broken body behind the dumpster. Impossible scenarios running through his mind, maybe if he had just gotten there quicker, Wraith wouldn't be unconscious right now, maybe if he'd looked in the right places, he could have stopped them from getting hurt entirely. He logically knew that this was a dumb train of thought, nothing could change the past, so there was no point in bothering about the what ifs. But the less rational part of him, a part that was much more of him than most people suspected, was terrified for his kid, terrified about what would happen if their situation took a turn for the worse.

Izuku felt the haze of sleep slowly leave their mind, stings of pain rushing through their body as they slowly became aware of their surroundings, they were laying on something soft, that wasn't right, they had been next to a dumpster, there couldn't have been anything this soft near it, it also felt like there was something wrapped around their body, the only thing that they'd expected was the familiar metallic stench of blood. They blearily opened their eyes and noted that they were no-longer outside, instead there was a dim light somewhere off to their left, and they were staring up at a grey ceiling. Why were they indoors? Whose house was this? How long had they been asleep? Their first instinct was to pretend to be asleep, their second was to look around and see where exactly they were. But before they could do either of those things, they heard a quiet gasp next to them.

"Wraith?"

And suddenly a hazy recollection events of earlier, collapsing next to the dumpster, being picked up by Aizawa, someone bandaging them up. They were in Aizawa and Yamada's apartment. Izuku quickly sat up, ignoring the stabbing pain that the action caused. Aizawa was sitting on a chair next to the couch, it was weird seeing him in something other than his hero costume, although, his normal outfit didn't seem all that different given that it was completely black, except for the cartoon cat face in the middle of his sweater. Izuku honestly thought it was hilarious that the most feared underground hero was completely obsessed with cats. They reached up to make sure their hoodie was still in place before they froze, remembering that they were wearing their school uniform, Aizawa could see their face, he knew who they were. Their breathing quickened, if Aizawa knew their identity, he could find their parents, they didn't want to go back, they didn't want to burden them with their presence.

"Wraith!" Izuku snapped out of their spiral, still panicking but they could hear Aizawa's voice calmly counting out a breathing pattern,

they tried their best to follow it, slowly calming down. They hadn't realized that they'd curled in on themselves, slowly uncurling they immediately noticed that Aizawa had gotten closer.

"I'm sorry, I'm so sorry, please don't send me back"

"Hey, kid, calm down, we're not going to do anything just yet, you're still hurt, we can discuss what to do after you're healed, okay?" Izuku nodded hesitantly, at least it gave them some time to figure out how to talk them out of contacting their parents.

Izuku properly looked around the room for once, the room was fairly large, it made sense if this was the living room, and there were three doors presumably leading to other rooms, as well as one short hallway that appeared to lead to the kitchen. The living room was decorated all around with pictures of Aizawa, Yamada, A woman with dark purple hair and a man with blue hair and pipes coming out of his elbows. Some of the more recent looking pictures also included someone with two-toned blonde and blue hair who was always close to the purple haired woman. There were also a few photos of cats scattered around. Which made sense given how much Izuku had heard about the pair of stray cats that Aizawa had insisted on keeping. And the dim light they'd seen earlier was just the sunrise through the window signaling the dawn.

While they were looking around, they heard someone else move into the room, they turned and saw Yamada standing in the doorway looking exhausted, before he noticed them, and then his entire face lit up like a light bulb. **"Hey little listener! You're awake!"**

Hizashi smiled at Wraith, he was a bit miffed that Shouta hadn't immediately woken him up when their kid had opened their eyes, but he couldn't be too mad seeing as his husband was currently hovering close to them and clearly still worrying over them. Besides he'd woken up anyways thanks to the commotion that he was now guessing was caused by Wraith waking up, also reminding him that he'd been careless and fallen asleep with his hearing aids in.

Hizashi walked over to the couch and stood next to Shouta, to give the kid some space **"how are ya feeling kid?"**. Wraith responded by shrugging their shoulders, an action which probably hurt a lot given their injuries, but they didn't seem to be bothered by it. Hizashi would be more concerned if he didn't know exactly why the kid had such a high pain tolerance.

”Well, in that case, I’m gonna go make breakfast, do you have any allergies?” Wraith shook their head, so Hizashi left the other two to talk while he made a simple omelet.

After breakfast, which was the best Izuku had even had, but that was probably not saying much considering they hadn’t had a home-cooked meal in years. Still it felt weirdly cozy, they’d expected it to feel awkward or uncomfortable, but it was just like they’d always been there, the conversation flowed smoothly from one topic to the next and while they were hesitant to add their own thoughts at first, they quickly found that they could easily interject without interrupting anyone. They had offered to help with the dishes, but Aizawa waved them off and said that he could do them alone. And Yamada had given them some clothes so that they could clean themself up a bit. Honestly the idea of a hot shower was incredibly appealing right about now.

Shouta walked back into the living room to find his husband on the couch, and no Wraith in sight “Sunshine, where’s Wraith?” he asked, sitting next to him.

”Oh, they’re probably having a shower right now, I figured I could at least let them clean up before we talk.”

”Speaking of, what exactly are the options here? The foster system is obviously out. And there’s no way we’re letting the kid go back to their parents, right?” Shouta knew the answer and also knew that he had several words for Wraith’s parents if he ever met them in person and none of them were kind.

”Definitely not, any parent who doesn’t notice their kid getting hurt almost every day is being willfully neglectful at best. I think we both know the best option is if they stay with us, or someone else they trust” as much as Shouta wished the kid would stay with them Hizashi was right, if the kid had somewhere safe they wanted to stay, Shouta couldn’t stop them.

”Well, whatever happens we need to open an investigation on their parents for child abuse”

”Unless that would cause more trouble for the little listener?” Damn it, Shouta knew his husband was correct, but he really wanted to make Wraith’s parents hurt, he sighed, he would hold off on hunting them down until Wraith said it was okay.

The discussion slowly steered away from Wraith for a while, until

Shouta heard footsteps and looked up to see Wraith, wearing a pair of pants too long for their legs and a shirt with the Put Your Hands Up Radio logo on it that hung from their frame. And Shouta could finally see what the kid actually looked like, their hair was green and curly, and it looked a little odd in places, like someone had done a bad job at cutting it. Their previously dull eyes were a shining emerald, and the most surprising of all, they had *freckles*. Both Shouta and Hizashi had the exact same thought *'our kid is adorable!'* Wraith sat down on one of the chairs next to them, fiddling with the hem of the shirt when a small meow caused them to look up.

A large fluffy brown cat flopped on the ground next to Izuku's feet, Yamada tried to reach out and pet her only to get clawed at, prompting him to stare at her incredulously "seriously? C'mon Mop, I know you hold a grudge, but this is getting ridiculous!"

"So this is Mop" Yamada once said that Mop was really distrusting of strangers, but apparently she was fine with Izuku, and apparently Yamada had done something to piss her off, "where's Shadow?" they had been told very little about the other cat, but they had seen a picture of her, she was a very tiny black cat with large yellow eyes.

"Probably hiding somewhere, don't worry, she'll show up eventually"

But before they could continue that conversation Aizawa tapped the table to get their attention, looking pointedly at Yamada whose face turned red with embarrassment, and Aizawa turned to look at Izuku "so now that everyone is settled, we need to discuss a few things". Izuku almost forgot about the talk they were supposed to be having. They really didn't know how they were going to get out of this.

Aizawa sighed perhaps sensing their hesitance "look, kid, we don't have to do anything drastic now, could you just tell us how you got so hurt?"

Izuku fiddled with the shirt again, before looking up at their teachers, they sighed and started signing "it was my fault, I punched my bully and I think I just made it worse"

"You punched your bully? Why exactly did you do that?"

"He's smart, so when I was getting better at avoiding him, he figured out that I was being trained by someone, he doesn't know who, but he said some really mean things about you, and I got really mad and kinda, just, punched him." Izuku looked down sheepishly

”So you punched him only because he was talking bad about me, but not because he was bullying you-“ Aizawa was silent for a good few seconds before shaking his head “okay, we can deal with *that* later, for now we need to figure out what’s going to happen from here, we’ve got two options, well, technically three but I don’t think you want to end up in the foster system” Izuku shook their head rapidly, thy had heard some real horror stories about the system, there was no-way they were getting put in there.

”Right, well, the other options are going back to your parents, or being put under the legal guardianship of an adult that you trust, I’m going to be honest, neither of us are keen on sending you back to your parents since they apparently just don’t notice when their child is hurt” Izuku had to stifle a laugh at that.

”Is something funny?”

”I haven’t seen my parents since I was four”

Shouta could feel his brain bluescreen at that and he could tell that Hizashi had the same reaction, Hizashi recovered first. “Hey little listener? Do you mind elaborating on that?”

”Well, that was when I was diagnosed quirkless, and they didn’t want a useless kid like me, so they threw me out and told me never to come back.”

Okay, forget harsh words, *when* Shouta found Wraith’s parents, he was going to *murder* them, actually forget that, a quick death was too much of a mercy, he was going to tear them apart *piece by piece* and make them regret every decision they’ve ever made.

Shouta took a deep breath, there was time to plot murder later, right now they had a kid to deal with who probably didn’t want to think about their parents too much “okay, so that’s off the table, I guess the only option would be to put you under a legal guardianship, is there anyone you’d trust to take care of you?”

Izuku thought about it, they didn’t really have anyone, the only people they’d ever really trusted were Aizawa and Yamada, but, what if they didn’t want Izuku? They didn’t want to impose, still, they had no other answer, ”I mean, I have, two people I’d trust, but I don’t know if they’d want me, and I don’t really want to upset them”

Aizawa sighed ”Wraith, listen, if they really care about you, they’ll

take you, who are they?"

Izuku took a deep breath weighing the options of being truthful, and eventually deciding that they had no other option "You two"

They braced themself for the inevitable rejection

"Kid, of course we'll take you in" Izuku's head snapped up, wide eyes looking at Aizawa, and then at Yamada who nodded.

"Yeah little listener, we'd love to have ya"

Izuku could feel themself tearing up, Yamada moved closer to them, arms open, silently asking permission, Izuku nodded and Yamada hugged them gently, being careful not to aggravate their injuries, eventually another pair of arms wrapped around both of them as Aizawa joined the hug. The three of them sat there for a good few minutes, Izuku feeling unwilling to leave the warm embrace of their teachers.

Eventually they let go of each other, Yamada was the first to break the silence. "Okay, so if you're staying with us, we're gonna have to get you some clothes, and anything else, you can stay in the guest room, we'll have to get some decorations for it, how about we go shopping in the afternoon?"

"We're also going to have to get whatever you have from wherever you were staying until now, speaking of which, where *were* you staying?" Aizawa asked.

"A warehouse about a block from where you found me, oh, and my bag and notebook is probably still by the dumpster"

Both adults looked incredulous at that, Yamada blinking repeatedly like he thought he misheard them, and Aizawa just sighed "alright kid, we can go do that now, and we need to get this guardianship properly legalized, we'll need your name for that though" he looked at Izuku questioningly.

Izuku smiled softly "My name is M-i-d-o-r-i-y-a I-z-u-k-u" they gave their sign name as well.

Yamada smiled "alright Midoriya-" but was interrupted by the kid shaking their head.

"I don't like my family name, could you use my given one instead?"

”Of course Izuku, let’s go get your stuff and then we can either stop by the station on the way back, or we can do that tomorrow if you like

Izuku nodded ”let’s do it today”

Aizawa spoke up “we also have to let Shuzenji know that the kid’s awake so that she can heal them properly”.

”Right, well, I’ll call her now”

Yamada stood up to call whoever Shuzenji was, while Aizawa somehow managed to find Shadow and introduced her to Izuku, and while everything was happening, Izuku couldn’t help but feel like everything was finally gonna be alright.

Chapter End Notes

> Finally! next chapter's gonna be a doozy, with the visits to the warehouse and the station, plus the obligatory shopping montage.

Chapter 15: New Guardians

Chapter Summary

The guardianship is legalised and Izuku and Hizashi go shopping.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku sat in the back of the car as they drove to the warehouse, Aizawa was in the driver's seat, saying that he didn't trust Yamada's driving skills with a child in the car, meanwhile, Yamada was pouting in the passenger seat. They thought that he might have been talking everyone's ears off if Izuku wasn't half asleep from being healed by Recovery Girl earlier, which, by the way, was so cool, they really wanted to ask more about how her quirk worked, but even with their mentors there, they really didn't want to risk it. Plus Aizawa had warned them that Recovery Girl knew nothing about them being a vigilante or their quirklessness, as far as she was concerned Izuku was just some kid that Aizawa had found behind a dumpster.

They'd already stopped by the dumpster and grabbed Izuku's backpack and notebook. And now they were pointing out the direction to the warehouse, which was a bit difficult since they'd never had to consider the roads before, having mostly navigated through the alleys and rooftops. Still they made it there, and they managed to grab the measly stash of clothes they had as well as all seven of their other notebooks. Yamada had looked around the warehouse, and managed to find their stash of medical supplies, which were nearly used up, this apparently warranted a horrified gasp and an almost whisper of "how is this kid still alive?" although Izuku couldn't really tell why, it was just a dozen or so empty burn cream containers, a pair of random scissors they'd found somewhere, mildly dirty bandages that had been in a hospital's dumpster, an only a little bit expired tube of wound cream as well as a medical needle and some thread to stitch themself up. Aizawa had just looked generally distressed the whole time.

Hizashi had no idea how Izuku had survived so long living like this, it was a miracle the kid hadn't gotten sick and died. Speaking of the little listener, they seemed to have gotten everything they wanted

from the warehouse, which was concerningly little, enough that all of it, minus the notebooks, could fit in the worn out yellow backpack they always carried around. They had tried to take their medical stash as well but both Hizashi and Shouta had insisted otherwise.

The three of them also needed to stop by the police station to report the whole abandoned child situation, and gain legal guardianship while they were at it, the process would probably be smooth once someone found Izuku's quirk status, a situation in which the legal system's tendency to overlook quirkless people would work in their favor. Hopefully they wouldn't run into any trouble.

Izuku was a bit nervous walking into the station, police were usually something they avoided, both as Wraith and Izuku, and they didn't particularly want all those eyes on them. However, the second they stepped into the station they could sense Yamada moving closer to them, almost shielding them from all the people around, making sure he was always nearby while Aizawa did all the necessary talking. The station itself wasn't that bad, and they weren't quite paying attention until they got to one of the desks, Aizawa had started what sounded like a formal report on their situation, leaving out a few details like the location of their warehouse and, of course, exactly how they met since that would mean bringing their vigilantism into the discussion, instead skipping to yesterday's chain of events. The officer had looked completely horrified, right up until she asked Aizawa for Izuku's details and their quirk status had to be brought up, her expression quickly became one of neutral indifference after that, and Izuku heard her mention how sorry she was for Izuku's parents. Yamada looked like he was about ready to start a fight right then and there after that comment, luckily for everyone Aizawa's glare was enough to shut her up and she stuck to processing the guardianship change. Apparently their parents never bothered to legally cut ties with them, but that wasn't really an issue since they had abandoned Izuku and could not be considered viable options, so Aizawa and Yamada were now officially their legal guardians for the time being.

As they were finalizing everything, a man walked up and greeted Aizawa in a friendly way, who was this and how did he know their mentors? He didn't look like a cop, he wasn't wearing a uniform, but he clearly worked here, the most likely answer was that the man was a detective, a thought that was confirmed when Aizawa called him detective.

Shouta could feel that this was gonna be a headache, Tsukauchi wasn't stupid, and with his quirk he was almost impossible to lie to,

Shouta was going to have to word his sentences very carefully to avoid triggering it. ”You know it’s unusual to see you in here during the day, what’s going on?” the detective asked, then he noticed Izuku and his eyes widened “wait, when did you and Yamada get a kid?”.

”First of all, Izuku isn’t our kid we’re their legal guardians”

”How on earth did that happen? I mean, no offense but you’re not exactly the first person that comes to mind for taking care of a kid.” Shouta had to think through his reply, as much as he trusted Tsukauchi as a colleague he didn’t know if the man would react poorly if he even suspected Shouta of lying, and Shouta wasn’t about to say anything that even hinted Izuku being Wraith, so he settled for something that was technically true.

“I found them behind a dumpster”.

Tsukauchi stared at him blankly for a few seconds, “excuse me? Care to elaborate?”

”Not really, we have to get going anyways” Shouta practically dragged Hizashi and Izuku out of the station and back into the car.

”Who was that? Why were you acting all weird?” Izuku asked.

”Tsukauchi Naomasa, a detective for the MPD, and the reason I was acting weird, is because his quirk lets him know when people lie, it’s a very difficult quirk to bypass, the less I said the better.” Shouta could see the exact moment that Izuku’s eyes lit up as he described Tsukauchi’s quirk, there was going to be a *lot* of questions.

Hizashi almost didn’t notice when the car had stopped outside the mall, too engrossed in his conversation with Izuku after Shouta gave up trying to keep up with their rapid fire questions. The little listener was already figuring out ways that a lie detector quirk could possibly be bypassed as well as trying to figure out what the quirk counted as a lie. The general theory, based on anecdotes from Hizashi and Shouta’s various cases with him, was that it wouldn’t trigger as a lie if the person genuinely believed that they were telling the truth.

It was an afternoon on a weekday so hopefully the mall wouldn’t be too busy, since most people were at work, but he figured it was still for the best if they did this as quickly as possible so as not to overwhelm Izuku. So the two of them went inside (Shouta had decided to stay in the car) and started looking around for all the necessary things.

Clothing was the tricky part, it took a lot of convincing to get Izuku to just pick out what they wanted, at first, they just followed him around, looking at a few things longingly but not really saying anything. Eventually after he called them out on it a few times they eventually just started pointing things out. It turned out that Izuku had an interesting sense of humour, Hizashi definitely giggled when the kid showed him a plain t-shirt that had pajamas written on it. He also insisted that they get at least one pair of slightly fancier clothes, which he had to pick out since Izuku thought that all of it looked the same.

Far simpler was getting things to decorate Izuku's room, all of the stuff they picked was hero themed, like a space bedsheet designed after Thirteen, and a (normal) poster of Midnight, he was sure Anan and Nemuri would be flattered.

"Hey Izuku, isn't your notebook almost full?" Izuku followed Yamada's gaze to a shelf full of notebooks and other stationery. He was correct, Analysis #8 only had a few pages left, enough for maybe two or three more entries. They nodded, "then we should get some more, pick three of the ones you like" Yamada said, waving in the direction of the shelf.

There were quite a few notebooks that caught Izuku's attention, but in the end they picked two of the more simple notebooks, similar to Analysis #8, they would have taken three, but some of the notebooks were hero-themed, and they found a Present Mic one, Yamada thought it was adorable.

Once they got everything they needed they headed back to the car where Aizawa was napping in the backseat. Yamada laughed at the sight.

"Hey Shou, love, wake up" Aizawa just grumbled and curled up like a cat.

"Alright then, I guess I'll have to drive." That got Aizawa's attention real quick, he bolted upright and glared at Yamada who just laughed at him.

"There you are, c'mon, let's go home."

The drive back was full of noise as Hizashi chattered about anything and everything that he could think of, Shouta would have been annoyed if it was anyone else, but he was used to his husband's

talkative nature by now, and Izuku seemed to be completely enthralled by whatever stories Hizashi telling.

It was getting late when they got back home so Hizashi immediately got started on dinner as Shouta and Izuku unpacked everything. Izuku still seemed a bit overwhelmed with the change from a decrepit warehouse to an actual room, but they seemed to be adjusting okay.

”Alright, that’s everything, I’ll let you settle in. I’ll be in the living room if you need me, okay?” Izuku nodded and Shouta left them alone.

A ringing sound alerted him to someone calling his phone, it was Nemuri, not entirely unusual for her to call at random times just to catch up on the latest gossip. He answered the call.

”Are you two okay!? Is someone dying? Is the world ending?” Nemuri’s panicked voice sounded from the phone.

”What? Nemuri, what’s going on?” Shouta was confused, what was she talking about?

”You weren’t at work this morning, and Nedzu told us that you were taking two days off, you never even take one day off, let alone *two*!”

”Oh, right, that, we’re fine Nem, something important just came up.”

”Something important, what is it!? Do I need to come over?” Shouta thought that was a terrible idea, him and Hizashi had taken those days off because they *didn’t* want Izuku to have to deal with too many people so soon, Nemuri was their best friend, but she could be a lot to handle sometimes.

”First, don’t come over, and second, you’ll have to find out on Thursday like everyone else.”

”Really? Oh fine, keep your secrets, see you on Thursday.”

Shouta knew that she was going to lecture them when she found out, but it was fine as long as she didn’t cause too much trouble for Izuku. But that wasn’t something that he needed to think about for now. All that mattered right now was that Izuku was safe and happy.

Chapter End Notes

I am *not* good at writing pure fluff like this chapter, hope I didn't

disappoint

Chapter 16: Settling in.

Chapter Summary

Izuku has a nightmare, and also fluff

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue
TW: dismemberment? I think? Also a bit of dehumanisation and suicide baiting in the first part.
If you want to skip the warnings go to the end of the *italics*

See the end of the chapter for more notes

”Why do you even bother?”

”Useless thing.”

”Nobody wants you.”

”The world would be better off without you.”

”They don’t care about you.”

”Stop being such a burden.”

The figures that surrounded them were blank, their faces only having wide, toothy grins as they taunted them, they tried to cry out, to argue, to say anything, but their mouth wouldn’t move, like it was glued shut. The figures circled closer and closer as the words started cutting into their skin leaving bloody gashes that covered the world in crimson and the figures started laughing.

”Look at them.”

”Weak.”

“Can’t even take an insult.”

”Pathetic creature.”

The figures reached forward and started tearing their skin off in chunks, fingers digging into them, removing flesh bit by bit. They felt tears roll down their face as their throat was taken, then their heart was pulled out

of their chest, it was being held by one of the figures, one who radiated rage and anger and smelt like burning sugar. They wished to cry, to tell him to stop, but they sat helpless as the figure crushed their heart in his fingers, the blood dripping through his fist. They felt their limbs go numb as the other figures started taking off their fingers, then their knees, their legs and arms, piece by piece. Until they couldn't move, the figures seemed to get bored, somehow that felt worse than anything else, after all, a doll is still useful as a plaything, but a broken one was truly useless. They felt someone beside them, someone who felt like safety and protection, but not for them, they couldn't reach out and find them, and that someone walked away. They cried what was left of their tears, the last thing their mind could feel was the happiness of everyone around them, all around but never coming close enough to reach them.

Izuku woke up gasping for breath, their hands clawed at their chest where their heart was still intact. It was a nightmare, Izuku knew that, they'd had this particular one a few times now. They calmed themself down, their shaking form wrapped in soft, star covered blankets as they slowly became aware of their surroundings, right, they were in the guest room at Aizawa and Yamada's apartment. It was supposed to be theirs, but, some part of them still felt that this was all too good to be true, no matter how much it seemed like their mentors, now guardians, really did want them around. Izuku slowly untangled themself from the blanket as they looked out the window above their bed, it was still dark outside, maybe close to dawn. They got out of bed, still shaking from the nightmare, knowing that the figures didn't entirely lie, even if two people truly cared about them, that was all they'd ever have, they still didn't have a place in the world, and maybe a few months ago, they would have just accepted that, and moved on, but now, a small spark inside them said that they could *make* a place for themself. But it was a small spark, and right now, after that nightmare, it was dangerously close to being snuffed out, no matter how much they trained, no matter how hard they tried, no matter how many times their mentors had told them that they *could* be a hero, they still had trouble truly believing it.

They had somehow ended up in the kitchen, Izuku didn't know how or why, their legs just carried them here, they heard a small noise from the counter, and a sleepy looking Shadow blinked her large eyes at them. Izuku gently picked her up and she started purring softly. They sighed, knowing that no-body else would be awake right now, they had checked the clock, it was two in the morning, And while Aizawa would have been awake if he had gone on patrol last night, but Izuku knew that both him and Yamada had taken the day off, so he'd probably be asleep. They wondered what they should do, they

didn't really want to stand around in the dark until their guardians woke up, they did have their hoodie in the room, it wouldn't hurt to go out for a quick run, right? They creeped back to the room, making sure not to make a sound, they set Shadow down on their bed and quietly changed out of their pyjamas into their hoodie, a pair of black pants and their bright red shoes. They snuck out of the window only to go right back when they realised they'd almost forgotten their face mask.

They climbed onto the fire escape of the nearby building, and scanned the area, realising that they had no idea where anything was, that made sense, they were several blocks away from their usual patrol area, but that just meant they'd have to explore and memorize this place. So they set off running, feeling the familiar cold air of the night as they hopped from rooftop to rooftop.

Shouta stood in the living room, drinking coffee from a cat mug, it was four in the morning, so Hizashi was still asleep, most likely Izuku was also asleep right now, so he was just standing around with Mop who was making herself a nuisance, although surprisingly Shadow was nowhere to be found.

He had wandered around for a few minutes before he heard a thud come from Izuku's room as well as a loud yowl, presumably from Shadow. Suddenly on high alert Shouta cautiously knocked on the door "kid?" He asked worry already creeping into his mind. The sounds of scuffling and the closing of a window caused him to tilt his head curiously, then the door opened and Izuku stood in the doorway in their Wraith outfit.

"Hey Aizawa, I can explain"

Shouta just sighed, sensing that this was going to be a headache, "you went patrolling?"

Izuku shook their head before pausing and looking down sheepishly "well, I just wanted to go for a run, but I did stop a mugging. It was only one though!"

"And why exactly did you even go out in the first place?" Shouta asked now noting down Izuku's movements to see if the kid was injured, luckily they appeared normal, but Shouta knew that only meant they didn't have a serious injury. Izuku shuffled their feet for a bit, seemingly trying to decide what to say. "Just tell me what happened, I'm not going to get mad or judge you."

”I had a nightmare” Izuku seemed to start shaking a bit.

”Do you want to talk about it?” Izuku shook their head “do you want to be alone for a bit?” Izuku shook their head frantically “okay then, how about I make us both some coffee and you can play with the cats for a while? Izuku nodded and picked up Shadow from where she’d been pacing on their bed.

Hizashi walked into the living room to find Shouta and Izuku curled up on the couch petting the cats and, was that coffee!? Did Shouta give their kid *coffee!* Hizashi sighed internally, knowing that on one hand, they probably needed it seeing as they must not have slept that well, given that they were wearing their Wraith outfit, did they go out last night? On the other hand, Izuku was nine, and giving a literal *child* coffee was a terrible idea.

Eventually he just decided to leave them alone and get started on breakfast, hopefully today wouldn’t be too exciting, Izuku needed a chance to get used to the place after all. Especially since they had no idea what to do tomorrow, most likely they were going to have to take the little listener to work with them, and hopefully they wouldn’t get into trouble, and hopefully none of their co-workers cause them any trouble. Not to mention dealing with Nedzu’s inevitable curiosity was going to be a pain.

The rest of the day seemed to go by far too quickly for Izuku, after breakfast the three of them had decided to stay at the apartment for the day and they just generally co-existed for the day, sometimes starting up conversations about whatever came to mind. Izuku generally started becoming more and more relaxed as the day went.

Dinner was great and Yamada had started telling a funny story about one of the heroes he’d worked with lately, eventually the topic turned to his and Aizawa’s co-workers at UA, and he seemed to remember something. “Izuku? I think I forgot to tell you earlier, but we might have to take you to work with us tomorrow, since we can’t leave you alone and most of our friends are too busy to watch you for the day, is that alright with you?” Izuku’s eyes widened and they nodded rapidly, who wouldn’t want to go to UA?

”Alright, if you’re sure then-”

”I’m super sure!” Izuku interrupted Yamada, who just chuckled at their enthusiasm. Izuku honestly couldn’t wait.

Chapter End Notes

Ya know, I wasn't sure if this would be enough for a chapter, but I just barely hit my word minimum so I guess it was.
next chapter is the rest of the staff meeting Izuku.
On a side note, does anyone have a list of western phrases I could use for Snipe?

Chapter 17: UA!

Chapter Summary

> Izuku goes to UA, meets the other teachers, talks to some of them, and a certain mammal causes a ruckus.

Chapter Notes

> --- : POV switch
> Signed Dialogue
> **Signed and Spoken Dialogue**

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku woke up to a cat's tail in their face, Mop had apparently decided to flop onto them sometime last night. They got out of bed, making sure not to startle Mop who looked rather annoyed that her perch had moved. They were still a bit sleepy but that quickly faded when they remembered that they were going with their mentors to *UA!* Today! They rushed to get ready and practically sprinted into the living room, almost running into Aizawa who was standing next to the table and going over some files.

"Good morning Aizawa!" Shouta stared at Izuku tiredly, this kid was way too excited for today.

"Mornings are never good, how do people even have this much energy in the morning?" he grumbled under his breath.

Izuku grinned and Shouta had to blink a few times because of how blindingly bright it was. Shouta was glad that the kid had relaxed a bit, they weren't as jumpy or nervous as they usually were, yesterday probably helped get them accustomed to the apartment. Hizashi had been nervous, worried that being surrounded by that many people would be too much for the kid, but it seemed that he had nothing to be concerned about, the kid had always loved heroes, still, they were still strangers, and the kid took so long to trust him and Zashi. Hopefully this would go smoothly.

Hizashi finally noticed that Izuku was awake, **"Morning little listener! You excited for today?"** Izuku nodded vigorously as they sat down for breakfast.

Hizashi was surprised that Izuku wasn't more nervous about today, they had practically bounced the entire time through breakfast and couldn't sit still during the whole car ride, instead striking up conversation with him about all the heroes working at UA and gushing about how awesome the school was, as well as all the heroes that had graduated from its hero course. Shouta had once again insisted on driving so it took longer than it should have, but eventually they reached the school, its familiar gates opening like the doors to a grand castle once both heroes scanned their employee IDs.

Izuku looked back at the gates of UA in awe, this was the best hero school in the country, and they were standing right inside its walls, they were inside *UA*. They looked around, adjusting their backpack, the main grounds were enormous! The building in front of them was the main school, but they could see other buildings further away, they had no idea what they were, but they were huge! It seemed that UA was just as grand as its reputation, it was honestly kind of intimidating. The inside of the main building seemed closer to a normal school, long hallways with various doors leading to different classrooms, and the doors were all huge! Probably to account for all kinds of mutation quirks, and one set of doors they passed by seemed like it had been blown up several times, given the charring and dents in it. But other than that it seemed pretty normal, the hallways were all quiet though, since none of the students had arrived.

Eventually they reached what was labelled as the teacher's lounge and Izuku could hear commotion from behind the door, and they could also hear Aizawa and Yamada being mentioned by name, something about a secret? They opened the door, their mentors went in first and immediately everyone went silent, Izuku saw several heroes exchange glances. Speaking of the heroes, there were so many!! They could name most of them, Snipe, Midnight, Hound Dog, Thirteen, Cementoss, Ectoplasm and Power Loader, there was also a hero they couldn't identify, but that was probably an underground hero like Aizawa.

Suddenly Midnight piped up "alright, you two have a lot of explaining to do, what on earth was so secretive that you couldn't even tell *me*? I mean I'm your best friend! Surely you could have told me *something*, at least given me a hint! I mean, at least you can explain yourselves now-"

"Is that a child?" Midnight was interrupted in her rant by Power Loader's surprised question.

All eyes turned to Izuku and they could feel themself wilting under the examining gazes. Until Yamada stepped in front of them and Aizawa glared at everyone in the room, quirk activated, which made most of them snap out of their staring, most, except for Midnight.

”When did you two get a child? Wait, is this what you were hiding from me!?” She sounded genuinely upset.

Aizawa sighed and began to explain “Nemuri, relax, first of all, this is Izuku, they’re not our kid, we’re just their legal guardians, secondly” he turned to everyone in the room “if any of you try to hurt them I will personally hunt you down and make you suffer.”

That seemed to get a reaction out of all of them, mainly fear and confusion. Snipe spoke up, seemingly voicing everyone’s thoughts “that’s nice an’ all, but where did you two get a *child*?"

“We found them behind a dumpster, ask Shuzenji, she’ll back us up.”

”A dumpster?” Ectoplasm sounded incredibly concerned.

”Yes Katou a dumpster, I found them while I was on patrol and since they didn’t have any safe place to go, we took them in.”

While most of the other heroes were questioning Aizawa and Yamada, Izuku couldn’t help but stare in awe at some of them, silently wondering if they would answer some questions, when they noticed that Hound Dog had been silent throughout the whole conversation, instead silently staring at them.

Ryo wasn’t entirely expecting the small child to walk up to him, normally children ran in the opposite direction on account of him looking absolutely terrifying to most. He had wanted to say hi to them, but the way the kid was acting it was clear that they weren’t used to all this attention, and he didn’t want to scare them.

”Hi, my name is Izuku” okay, the kid was signing, luckily Ryo knew JSL, he wouldn’t be a good therapist if he didn’t.

”Hello Izuku, it’s nice to meet you” the kid’s eyes lit up when he responded in sign.

”You know sign? That’s cool! Not a lot of people know sign!” Izuku smiled at him, and goodness that was a bright smile, their excitement was almost infectious! ”Oh by the way, I, um, I wanted to say that you’re a really cool hero!”

Ryo titled his head ”you’re not scared of me?”

”No! You’re a hero! You save people! Why would I be scared of you?” Oh, that, that was not what Ryo had expected, this kid was sunshine incarnate he couldn’t figure out the reason for Aizawa’s threat earlier, who on earth would want to hurt this kid? He tried to give the kid a smile, not particularly natural for his snout, but most people didn’t read happiness any other way.

Izuku frowned at him, ”are you trying to smile? That looks difficult”

”You’re good at reading people aren’t you?” that was unusual for a kid who looked like they were still in elementary school, he noticed the scars scattered on the kid’s arms, they looked like they’d been done at different times. Ryo’s seen plenty of abused and bullied kids before, and now that he was actually looking he could see the way that they were trying to make themself smaller, and almost never looking directly at anyone when they were having a conversation and they had been reacting to things going on outside of the conversation, things that either required enhanced hearing to notice, or a constant awareness of ones surroundings.

Izuku nodded, they looked like they wanted to say something, but seemed too nervous to do so ”you have a question?”

”It’s nothing” Izuku seemed to shrink in on themself even further, Ryo figured that he should drop it.

Izuku thought that Hound Dog was really nice, even nicer than Yamada said he was! And he’s a cool hero! They had an entry on him in their notebook, and he didn’t only fight villains, he also did search and rescue with his enhanced senses. They had so many questions about his quirk but they didn’t want him to hate them, so they kept their mouth shut. Meanwhile the others had apparently finished questioning their mentors and seemed to have mostly calmed down, all except for Midnight who was apparently lecturing Yamada about keeping secrets from friends and Thirteen, who appeared to be trying to drag Midnight away, unsuccessfully.

Izuku saw Power Loader in the corner trying to ignore everything that was going on, Cementoss looking on at the commotion tiredly and Ectoplasm seemingly encouraging Midnight’s ranting. Eventually Midnight stopped to catch her breath and was immediately wrapped in capture scarf, effectively shutting her up.

”Are you done?” Aizawa asked her.

Midnight nodded and he released her, “can I introduce myself to the kid?”

”Sure, they’ll only respond in JSL though. And tone down the energy”

”Yeah yeah, I get it” she walked over to Izuku. **“Hi I’m Kayama Nemuri, nice to meet you Izuku!”**

”Nice to meet you Kayama-San”

”Oh you’re such a sweetie, aren’t you?”

Someone’s phone started making noise and several people in the room visibly tensed, Yamada, Aizawa, Power Loader and the hero that Izuku couldn’t recognize. Cementoss chuckled as he silenced the alarm and gathered up some papers and left the room, Power Loader quickly followed suit, muttering something about unsupervised demons, the other three just grabbed a stack of papers and ran out of the room. Yamada stopped for a second to make sure that Kayama would watch them to which she agreed.

Izuku waved at Kayama to get her attention “what is it sweetie?”

”What just happened?”

”Oh, homeroom is about to start so the homeroom teachers had to get to their classrooms in time, Ishiyama always makes sure of it.”

Izuku nodded and decided to pass the time by sitting in the corner and make some extra entries in their notebook, including a full page of rambles on the other hero, trying to figure out who he was, probably an underground hero, not just cause Izuku hadn’t heard of him, but also cause he seemed to be in the same state of constantly alert that Aizawa was, something Aizawa said was from being an underground hero. As for his quirk Izuku had no idea, he had those tusks, but that could mean anything, his costume had interesting looking gloves and that thing on his back, probably support gear, but still they couldn’t tell what they were used for. Still, other things were easier to pin down, like the fact that he was probably a close range fighter as evidenced by his build and the small scars all over his skin.

Several hours passed no-one seemed to bother them, some of the heroes left and at some point Yamada came back, but had to leave rather quickly to teach the English class. Later Aizawa and the other

hero came back, both looking more tired than earlier, and they looked to be arguing about something. And apparently this was normal as everyone in the room either sighed or rolled their eyes, Izuku couldn't tell what exactly they were talking about, some names were tossed around that they didn't recognize and incidents they had no idea about were brought up, but it sounded like they were trying to see who had the most troublesome class.

"Kan, Aizawa, could both of you keep your pettiness out of the teachers lounge?" Ectoplasm said, he looked annoyed. Well, at least Izuku had a name to put on their list of information.

Several other teachers trickled back in as classes wrapped up, Izuku could hear the cheers of the students outside in the hallway, surprisingly no-one had bothered them yet, perhaps because of Aizawa's threat that morning, but Izuku was still observing Kan, looking for any sign of what his quirk could be, they weren't getting much, until they noticed that he was absentmindedly waving his hand around, a clear sign of a type of kinesis quirk, which were a subsection of emitter quirks that allowed its user to mentally control things, usually a particular type of thing like water or fire, sometimes more unusual like plants or technology. Now the question was, what was he manipulating, Izuku had to strain their eyes to see, since his desk was across the room from them, but they could just about make out a few drops of some red liquid, was that blood? Cool! It also explained the weird gloves, probably a way to easily access blood. Now question was, what were the details of his quirk? That was almost impossible without seeing it in action or asking him directly.

A presence shifted in the vents, Izuku noticed that Aizawa, Kan and Hound Dog stiffened in their seats, they almost looked, worried? Something small dropped down from the vent, a small furry white animal, wearing a suit, the principal of UA, Nedzu. "Good evening staff, and Izuku, am I a dog a mouse or a bear? I am the Principal!" they could see Aizawa and Yamada's gaze flick from the notebook to Nedzu and back again rapidly.

Power Loader sighed "I don't like where this is going" Thirteen nodded in agreement, Izuku was confused, surely it wasn't that bad, then their mind flashed back to the several times Aizawa had referred to Nedzu as a 'bastard rat god' and they realised it probably was that bad.

"Don't worry, I am only here because I couldn't help but notice how intelligent little Izuku here is" now most people looked confused and

Aizawa was looking around frantically before his eyes zeroed in on a spot in the celling behind Izuku, they looked up and noticed a camera blinking back at them, from its perspective, it would have seen everything that Izuku had written for the past few hours. Nedzu cackled as he saw the gears turn in Izuku's head, "yes, I noticed all those notes of yours, that book is rather interesting, and I couldn't help but notice how quickly you identified Vlad King's quirk even without any prior knowledge."

"Wait what!?" Kan looked halfway between confused and concerned "what is he talking about!?"

Izuku looked down at the two pages of notes they'd made on Kan, and quickly added the information on his hero name to that list. Yamada groaned "I was hoping this *wouldn't* happen."

By now everyone else had stopped working and was now fully focused on Izuku and Nedzu, Izuku debated what to do, and figured their notes were probably going to be seen anyways, so they might as well get some answers out of it. They got up and reluctantly approached Kan's desk, setting their notebook down in front of him, "a notebook? What's-" Kan went quiet as he read further, "holy shit, how did you?"

Nedzu cleared his throat "yes well, as you can see, Izuku here has quite the talent for analysis, and I was simply too intrigued to not talk to them", by now almost everyone else had gathered around and began reading their notes.

"This is incredible" Ectoplasm exclaimed, "this kid's got to have some kind of intelligence quirk like Nedzu, right?"

"I asked myself the same thing, but imagine my surprise when I found their quirk registry only to discover that they are quirkless!" Izuku froze, out of the corner of their eye they noticed Aizawa's hand go to his capture scarf and Yamada was glaring daggers at the principle. Everyone else seemed to freeze as well, brains processing the new information.

And all at once several people started talking, Kayama and Ectoplasm were saying that it was impossible for a kid these days to not have a quirk, Power Loader, Cementoss and Snipe were muttering amongst themselves and staring at the notes, and the others, Hound Dog, Thirteen and Kan, were looking at Izuku with concern.

"Everybody ***quiet***" Yamada shouted, managing to get everyone to stop talking "yeah, Izuku's quirkless, if any of you lot have a problem with

that I suggest you leave this room immediately" nobody left, but Izuku could see both Kayama and Ectoplasm look at them with what they knew was pity, pity for the weak little Deku, well, at least it was better than being hated. No-one else seemed to notice though, so they ignored it.

Nedzu turned and spoke to Izuku "I apologize, I did not mean to cause a commotion, I simply wished to know whether you planned on improving that skill of yours, you could have a future in professional analysis with some development".

"Thank you Nedzu-San, I want to improve, but I'm not planning to go into professional analysis"

"Oh?"

"I want to be a hero immediately they heard protests from Ectoplasm and Kayama, that it was too dangerous for them, that they'd get hurt. And they were silent, Aizawa and Yamada tried to speak up, speaking specifically to their friend, but Izuku had had enough, everyone in their life told them they couldn't be a hero, but they'd been a vigilante for the past two and a half years, they'd found two people who believed in them, wanted to help them be a hero, hell, they could hold their own against Eraserhead! So why couldn't they be a hero? Just because they were more likely to get hurt? Every hero risked their lives fighting for justice! What was so different when they wanted to do it?

Izuku slammed their hands on the table silencing the fight. "I. Don't. Care."

"I know that its going to be tough, but why shouldn't I try? If I work hard enough, harder than anyone else, why couldn't I be a hero? There are so many heroes with non-combative quirks, if they can learn to fight villains, why couldn't I? I'll tell you, there is no reason, I can, no, I *will* be a hero! To help the people that everyone else forgets about, the ones who need a hero to save them because they can't save themselves! Isn't that what being a hero is about?"

Everyone was silent, Kayama looked embarrassed while Ectoplasm looked genuinely impressed by their little rant, Nedzu had a glint in his eye, and their mentors looked at them with beaming pride.

"Well, the kid's determined, I'll give 'em that" Snipe finally broke the silence "and I kinda have to agree with them."

People slowly started agreeing, until Nedzu piped up “well that was a passionate speech, and personally I don’t see the flaw in their logic, in fact” he spoke directly to Izuku “if you would like, I wish to mentor you, a mind as quick as yours can be a deadly weapon if sharpened” the mammal reached out a paw for a handshake.

They looked back at Aizawa and Yamada, they simply shrugged as if to say it was Izuku’s choice.

Izuku returned the handshake. And everyone felt an ominous shift in the balance of the universe.

”Excellent, we can start tomorrow, bring your notebook, and any other analyses you have.”

”Of course, Nedzu-Sensei.”

Chapter End Notes

> Well, here’s another double length chapter!
>
> Fun fact, this was one of three scenes that constituted the original idea for this fic.
>
> also I had to make names for Snipe and Ectoplasm, which I just picked based on the meanings listed on these websites: https://www.behindthename.com and https://surnames.behindthename.com
>
> Snipe: Takeda Kazumi
> Ectoplasm: Katou Hirohito

Chapter 18: First Lesson

Chapter Summary

Izuku's first lesson with Nedzu

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

There are two OCs in the chapter, but that's just because I had to fill out some of the students, they won't be major characters (I think).

See the end of the chapter for more notes

While walking down the identical looking hallways that seemed to just lead into more identical hallways, Izuku wondered if the maze-like design of UA was intentional, knowing what they knew about Nedzu, it probably was. Luckily, they had Aizawa with them so they wouldn't get lost, but memorizing the whole place was going to take a few tries. They hadn't really gotten a good look at the inside of the building yesterday, on account of staying inside the teachers' lounge the whole time, and while the place looked like the furthest thing from the alleyways Izuku had called home, its layout was surprisingly similar. Izuku also realised exactly how few blind spots there were in the camera system, after yesterday they were keeping an eye out for any cameras in unexpected places, not just the usual corners, and there were camera's everywhere, ceilings, walls, Izuku could have sworn they even saw one embedded into one of the lights.

By the time they finally got to the rather large wooden door labelled 'Principal's Office' Izuku was thoroughly convinced that there was no corner of the school that didn't have a camera linked to it. There must have been one in the door as well, because it opened right as they got there, opening with an ominous creak that couldn't be real given the pristine state of the door, Izuku was starting to get the sense that Nedzu just liked messing with people's minds. Speaking of the mammal, there he was, sitting in his chair, shuffling through some papers and sipping tea, if one didn't know of Nedzu's reputation, they might think he looked relaxed, Izuku had heard enough to suspect that he was just luring them into a false sense of security. The moment that Izuku stepped into the room his beady eyes locked onto them,

and it suddenly felt like they were being dissected, each and every imperfection seen and catalogued, they were being watched like prey, and there was *nowhere to hide.*

”Good morning Izuku, care for some tea?” It was phrased like they had a choice in the matter.

”Good morning Nedzu-Sensei” they sat down across from the mammal, actually, come to think of it, what *was* Nedzu? They doubted he was any of the three options he usually gave, they’d have to do some research tonight. They took the offered cup of tea.

Aizawa spoke to Nedzu before leaving to teach his class, “I know your moral compass is completely different to a human’s, but keep the unethical tactics out of the lesson plan.”

A few papers were surreptitiously put back into drawers, “of course, even if those are effective strategies, I understand that you humans have an aversion to manipulation.” Izuku wondered exactly what was in those papers, they would be lying if they said they weren’t the slightest bit curious as to what could be so horrible that Aizawa specifically mentioned not letting them learn it.

Once Aizawa left, Nedzu turned those soul piercing eyes back to Izuku, and they had to supress a fearful shiver, there were several seconds of silence. ”I brought my notebooks” they had no idea what exactly Nedzu wanted from them, but they seemed to have made the right decision by starting the conversation. They set the notebooks down in front of Nedzu, hand hovering over them for a second of hesitance, despite all the reassurances, they still felt like they were putting their soul into the hands of fate, they knew that if something were to happen to their notes, it would destroy them. And here they were, handing over their most precious possessions to someone who could ruin their life in a heartbeat.

”Excellent” Nedzu flipped through the books rather quickly, Izuku eyed the pages for any damage as he continued reading. “Well, these certainly are impressive considering your age” he said, “but there are quite a few problems in how you would put this information into practical use, for example take your entry on Ryukyu a lot of the weaknesses listed work theoretically, and you certainly take into account the skill level of the hero in both combat and strategy, you seem to forget that there are much simpler ways of executing the plans listed. No matter, we will have time to sort that out later. For now, reading these notes have confirmed my suspicions that if you are

to continue improving your notebooks would quickly become dangerous, even now some of your work could cause incredible amounts of damage if it fell into the wrong hands." Izuku was stunned, their notes might have been a bit weird, sure, but dangerous? Then again those pages listed numerous ways to take down some high ranking heroes, they could see how that could cause trouble, but surely their analyses weren't *that* good, if they were that dangerous, maybe it was a good thing no-one ever took a second to read their notes, they could have accidently hurt so many people. Nedzu continued speaking, seemingly unaware of the minor mental crisis he'd caused "which is why I feel that you should encode your notes, I can help you create a code that is unique to you and thus far less likely to be decoded."

"My own code? I suppose that makes sense"

"Then let's get started."

The next three or so hours were dedicated to setting a foundation for the code, a combination of various ciphers, languages and symbols that they would have to build from, Izuku's head was swimming with all kinds of new information as they dedicated their focus to keeping up with the thought process of the smartest mammal in Japan, and even then Nedzu had to explain things a few times over for them to understand.

Nedzu was officially impressed, sure he had suspected the child to be smart, and have the potential for more, but he certainly didn't expect how quickly they picked up on things, he was quite used to having to repeat himself numerous times when talking about a subject as complex as encryption, but Izuku somehow kept up well enough that he only had to do so a few times. It was also clear that they should have been at a much higher education level by now given how easily they understood the semi-complex math that he had to explain, he was going to have to investigate some things, namely their prior place of education, and perhaps Aizawa had some answers as to why such a bright young mind hadn't been allowed to grow. He filed that away for a later date, for now, he decided to give Izuku a break from the long process of code making before they got too overwhelmed, seeing as they were already showing signs of distress, perhaps a little practical work.

"Perhaps we should stop here, codes like this can take days if not weeks to create and longer to memorize, until then I would advise that you stop analysing active heroes" Nedzu could see their shoulders

sag, he could read humans well enough to know that it was likely sadness at being unable to indulge in their hobby. “However it would be beneficial for you to continue to practice, I believe the third years are having some combat classes in twelve minutes, I would like you to pick two of them to analyse today, Takeda-San is supervising the lesson, just inform him I sent you to observe.”

Izuku’s eyes brightened and Nedzu was sure that if he could feel the same emotions that humans did he would find it endearing. They immediately got up and started walking off before stopping and asking for directions to the gym where the class was being held. He gave them the vaguest directions he could reasonably expect them to understand and sent them on their way, watching their progress through the cameras, it was amusing, they got turned around quite a few times and had to double check their location more times than that, still, they managed to reach the gym only one minute and thirty six seconds late.

Izuku walked into the building labelled gym alpha where all forty of the third-year hero course students were scrambling around, and lining up at training mats while Snipe, Takeda, watched the chaos carefully, calling out anyone that got too rowdy as they paired up, presumably to spar with each other. Not particularly wanting to deal with the number of people in the room, Izuku snuck their way to the hero, instinct honed over years of dodging their classmates allowed them to pass undetected. They had also apparently evaded detection by Takeda himself, as when they tugged on his cape he practically jumped as he whirled around with a hand over his gun. Izuku quickly backed off, hands in the air, Takeda just took one look at them and sighed.

”Howdy kid, whatcha doin’ here?”

”Nedzu-Sensei wanted me to observe and analyse two of the students” they signed, silently noting that the few closest students had started whispering in curiosity.

”Right then, I’ll put you with Igarashi and Haruko, those two are serious enough that they ain’t likely to cause a fuss” Takeda looked over at the chaotic group of students and called out “Thundercloud, Flora! Come up here would ya?”

Two of the students walked up to the front, the first was a tall, lean guy with a costume consisting of dark grey leggings and turtleneck with white goggles, *’no obvious mutations, probably an emitter quirk,*

likely not a physical fighter given the lack of obvious armour, although his clothes could be padded, and the goggles are support gear, so he needs to protect his eyes, likely from his own quirk, his hero name's Thundercloud, maybe his power has to do with the weather, or storms specifically?'. The other was a rather muscular girl with floral patterned pants and a sleeveless green top, she also had a leaf shaped cloak and a belt with numerous pouches, *'there's a lot of plant imagery in her costume, possibly a plant related quirk, makes sense if her hero name's Flora, if that belt has anything to do with her quirk it's probably one that requires existing material to work, but she could probably throw a good punch, she looks scary.'*

"Hey Takeda-Sensei, what's going on?" Flora asked.

Takeda stepped to the side so that they could clearly see Izuku "this is Izuku, they're gonna be observing your spar, Izuku this is Haruko Ayame, hero name Flora, and Igarashi Hayate, hero name Thundercloud" Igarashi just nodded at them while Haruko's eyes lit up "hi! Are you new? Look, if any of these punks bother you just let me know alright?" Izuku just nodded hesitantly, she looked fierce, not someone you wanted to end up fighting.

Takeda quickly shooed both of them back to the training mats, and Izuku just took out their notebook and noted down the scramble of thoughts they had noted even before seeing both quirks in action. As both students clashed Izuku's hand flew across the page, noting down every detail they could see. Igarashi went on the aggressive, a miniature storm levitating around him and crackles of lightning striking out at Haruko, *'interesting, it looks like Igarashi's quirk can summon storms, and he seems to be able to control where the lightning it produces strikes but it also looks like the storm itself is stuck swirling around his body.'* Haruko reaches into her pouch and tosses out a bunch of seeds that sprouted instantly into vines that grew around Igarashi and bound him in place, but one strike of lightning burnt the vines enough to free himself just before Haruko could land a punch. *'Interesting, her quirk seems to let her speed up the growth of plants, it can't be creation because she needed to throw those seeds, and I don't think it's a kinesis quirk cause she keeps throwing out new seeds every time, instead of controlling the plants to move. But it also looks like she can control exactly how they grow, plus the plants themselves appear to be enhanced.'* The two continued fighting, showing both their strengths and weaknesses, Haruko seemed to fall into a pattern after some time mainly using vines to attempt to grapple her opponent, while Igarashi, despite starting the fight aggressively, was quickly thrown into a defensive position, still, it was clear that if Haruko managed to

grapple Igarashi the match would be over, same thing for if Igarashi ever got an opening to attack.

The match continued on for a while, in fact it was the longest spar out of the entire class until finally Haruko managed to get past Igarashi's storm barrier by growing a dense bush as a shield, allowing her to pin him to the ground. Izuku took that as an opportunity to take their leave, mostly dodging any questions from the surrounding students, almost being cornered by one student who began asking question after question, before Haruko quickly made good on her promise and pulled them away, giving Izuku a chance to escape. They made their way back to Nedzu's office.

"Well, this is excellent work, although several assumptions have been made, they are all logically deduced, and mostly correct, just like your other notes." Nedzu said as he read their notes, "now tell me, if you were to fight them, what could you use to your advantage?"

"For Igarashi, I'd find a way to stall the fight, hopefully by throwing as many obstacles as possible at him, his storm seems to be concentration based and the more he has to focus on dodging, the less he can use his storm as anything but a shield, as for Haruko, she's a close range fighter, if I could attack her from a distance I would be able to incapacitate her without much danger to myself."

"Good, I'll have to mention your findings to Takeda, hopefully he can work on that, while it is often good to be focused on one area of combat, it can be detrimental if you completely ignore other skills." That seemed to be unprompted advice when the people couldn't even hear it, unless, was he giving that advice to Izuku? They got the sense that Nedzu's teachings were going to be awfully roundabout if they didn't catch on quick enough.

The two of them talked some more, mainly discussing some of the other notes Izuku had made on the two third years, until Yamada showed up to let them know that it was time to leave, they quickly said bye to Nedzu, as well as the other teachers when they stopped by the teacher's lounge to get Aizawa. They ended up telling their mentors all about their first lesson with Nedzu on the way home.

Hizashi watched in amusement as Izuku went on and on about the two students they'd had to analyse, and the code Nedzu was helping them create. He almost didn't notice his phone pinging with a single message, he checked only to realise he had several more unread messages from Tensei, apparently Nemuri had tattled, and he was

wondering if he could bring his little brother over to meet Izuku on Sunday, Hizashi resolved to discuss that with Izuku later, but the newest message was from Nedzu.

What do you know about Aldera Elementary?

Hizashi didn't know if he'd even heard that name before, but he figured that Nedzu wouldn't ask him if he didn't suspect that Hizashi could get some answers. Still, everyone was tired after a long day, surely all this could wait 'till the morning.

Chapter End Notes

uh oh, Aldera better watch out!
But first, Izuku is gonna meet their cousin!

Chapter 19: An odd start to an odd friendship.

Chapter Summary

The Iida brothers meet Izuku

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue
Signed and Spoken Dialogue

This chapter is mostly the brothers' POV

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tensei wasn't sure how a child like Tenya could possibly be so, stiff, don't children normally take after the rest of their family? But one look at the Iida family would tell you that wasn't the case with Tenya, both of their parents were pretty easy-going, and Tensei himself was always cracking jokes and, despite what his little brother would say, never quite followed the rules to a T. After all, he had become friends with Hizashi and Nemuri, you didn't do that without being at least a little bit of a rulebreaker. But Tenya was always the kind to emphasize the law and duty and stuff, maybe it was because he grew up with three heroes always around him, and that he didn't have any friends his age except for other legacy kids like the Todoroki kids and the Yayorozu girl, all of whom could also be classified as far too grown up for their age. So when he'd gotten the text from Nemuri about how Shouta had apparently found a child while on patrol and decided to take them in, Tensei was at first surprised, then curious, he texted Hizashi (Shouta never responded to texts) and asked to meet them, and if he could bring Tenya along. Not only did he want to meet this kid, but it would be nice if Tenya could make friends with a (hopefully) normal child. Hizashi had texted him back that morning saying that he was welcome to come over, so he now he just had to bring it up to Tenya.

Everyone had sat down for dinner, and Tensei was fiddling with his chopsticks, Tenya narrowed his eyes at his big brother's behaviour, it was really weird for Tensei not to have made at least one attempt at a joke throughout the dinner, however he seemed to be mumbling something under his breath. Tenya was curious, but it was most likely a particularly tough villain, or whatever mountains of paperwork he

had to go through. Despite only being twenty four, Tensei had already taken over running the agency, and the last few months had been really tough, so he was swamped with paperwork for one thing or another all the time. But after dinner Tensei spoke up before anyone could leave the table.

”Is it alright if I take Tenya with me to visit some friends tomorrow afternoon?”

Tenya wasn’t too familiar with Tensei’s friends, they had visited before but they usually stuck to Tensei, and occasionally talked to him, but he had mostly ignored them. He didn’t think there was a reason for him to be tagging along with Tensei, apparently their parents also had the same thought. “Tensei, you know you don’t really need to ask our permission for that, right?” Mama asked.

”I know Mama, its just that, Zashi and Shou are apparently taking care of a kid who’s Tenya’s age and I thought, well, it might be good for him to meet someone he can be friends with.”

Tenya straightened up at the mention of that, a friend? But, he didn’t know how to make friends, every kid he knew was just, not interested, or they were friends in the way that they met once in a while, like whenever there was a big event, but they weren’t friends in the way that Tensei described his friendship with Midnight and Present Mic, and even Eraserhead. He doubted that this new kid would want to be friends with him either, but, if his brother thought it was a good idea, then he would at least give it a try.

Sunday afternoon, Tensei knocked on the door of his friends’ apartment, several shuffling sounds came from inside before Hizashi opened the door. “Hey Tensei! And little Tenya too, I’d say I’m pleasantly surprised, but obviously you told me earlier” huh, Hizashi seemed tired, maybe that was the effect children had on people.

”Hey Hizashi” Tensei stepped into the apartment, the first thing he noticed was the amount of paper scattered on the desk in the living room, all essays written in English, huh, Hizashi must have been grading assignments. Now, where was the kid? Shouta had also been grading something, but now he was watching the three of them with what seemed to be amusement, that was never a good sign when it came to Shouta, if he was amused it meant that there was mischief just around the corner. Hizashi seemed to catch on pretty quickly and started looking around frantically, eventually his eyes locked onto a spot just behind Tenya. Tensei turned around only to see a small child

staring at him and writing something in a notebook. It was, actually kind of unnerving, the kid was just staring at him like they could see into his soul, those emerald eyes, vivisecting the very fibres of his being.

Hizashi seemed to be either completely unaware of the stare or was simply ignoring it. **"Izuku, this is Iida Tensei, and his little brother Tenya, they're the friends we were telling you about! Tensei, Tenya, this is Izuku."** The child just nodded, and added something else to their notebook.

"Yamada, you didn't tell me your friend was I-n-g-e-n-i-u-m" wait, what. How on earth did this tiny child even know that?

"That's, impressive kid, how did you know that?"

The kid stared at him, and Tensei was starting to feel like he had said something incredibly stupid. "You have pipes on your elbows." okay well now Tensei really felt like he was being stupid, how on earth had more people not made that connection before?

Tenya was a bit confused, this kid, Izuku, had just been staring at his brother, and now was conversing with everyone in what Tenya assumed was sign language, he had to assume because he couldn't understand a single bit of it, there had been no reason for him to learn, despite his brother being quite fluent. But one other thing was bothering him, and that was they had only been introduced by their given name, and Tenya wasn't entirely sure what to do, they weren't friends so it would be impolite to only refer to them by their given name, so the only logical solution was to find out what their family name was.

But first, he had to know what everyone was talking about "excuse me? But, what are you saying?" he asked them. They looked at him and tilted their head, then picked up a different notebook and scribbled something in one of the pages. They handed him the notebook, one of the pages was covered in notes and diagrams about, something, it was a bit hard to tell with just how much of it there was, and the other one just had "you don't know sign?" written on it.

"No, sorry" Tenya really did feel sorry, it wasn't fair to ask them to go out of their way and write down everything they wanted to say to him. They shrugged and wrote down "that's fine, most people don't".

Izuku noticed that the grown-ups had decided to have their own conversation a little bit away from both of them, but Izuku could see that Aizawa was paying close attention to them, just in case.

They had a bunch of questions, surely Iida had a lot of things to say about his brother, and then their notes would be even better! But, no, they couldn't be too careful, but the idea of information right in front of them had them subconsciously reaching for their analysis notebook.

Then, Tenya asked an unexpected question "what's your family name?"

They had no idea why on earth that was what Tenya asked them, but they answered anyways, writing down in the spare notebook "Midoriya, why?"

"Because it would be rude of me to call you by your given name Midoriya-San" Izuku scrunched up their nose and they could see Aizawa tilt his head towards both of them, ready to intervene if Iida did anything to make them uncomfortable. In fact Yamada and Iida's older brother also looked over at them.

"Why?" They wrote.

"Because we're not friends yet, only friends call each other by their given names! Anything else is just impolite!" Iida said, well, that was true, but, they didn't want to be called by their family name.

Then again, what exactly meant that they weren't friends? Izuku figured that Iida was being really friendly considering that he hadn't even insulted them yet, and he was actually talking to them, Izuku thought about it, they kind of were already friends, weren't they? They wrote "how do you become friends with someone?"

Iida froze for a bit, they could see the gears in his head turning "well, I don't know, I think you just talk to someone, and then they agree to be friends with you?"

"Then do you want to be my friend?" they wrote.

Iida looked thoughtful for a bit "okay, I guess this means I can call you Izuku, and you can call me Tenya! This is exciting, I've never had a real friend before!"

"Neither have I! But now we both have a friend!" Izuku wrote.

”Yay! But, now we have to tell each other about ourselves, that’s what I’ve seen friends do in the movies and stuff” Tenya asked.

”Okay, how about we take turns asking each other questions?” Izuku wrote “I’ll go first, who’s your favorite hero?”

”Obviously its Ingenium! My big brother is the best there is!”

Tensei watched the interaction with growing confusion and amusement, leave it to his friends to find a child just as odd as them. Somehow both kids had become fast friends by entirely ignoring the normal way in which people made friends, and honestly? Tensei was beginning to think that this way was much more efficient. He could hear Hizashi laughing behind him.

”I can’t believe it, I’m going to be honest, I expected that little Tenya’s bluntness would have made things difficult, but it looks like both of them are actually getting along!”

After a while Tensei had to drag Tenya away from his new friend so that they could go home. But on the way Tenya wouldn’t stop talking about how smart Izuku was, apparently those notebooks were filled with hero analyses, and they had one on Ingenium. Of course that’s all that Tenya would talk about until they got home. And after dinner he immediately retreated into his room, which was unusual, but soon after he approached Tensei and asked if he could use his computer.

”What for?”

”I wanna learn JSL so that I can talk to Izuku!”

Oh, that was adorable “sure!, I can teach you some too.”

”Yes please!” Tenya sounded so excited, so they studied different signs until it was time for Tenya’s bedtime. Tensei was sure that letting Tenya meet Izuku was one of the best decisions he’d ever made.

Chapter End Notes

Their interactions are precious to me.

also I am so sorry that I'm a whole day late on the chapter, my family and I were moving into a new house.

Chapter 20: The start of Aldera's downfall.

Chapter Summary

A routine meeting turns into the entire staff calling for the investigation and shutting down of Aldera

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

Minor TWs for mentions of bullying, violence, and suicide baiting

So, heads up, there are some gender related headcannons (basically I messed around, did some projecting and gave some of the characters a bunch of pronouns) that I didn't have enough space to tag (I only tagged genders for Izuku and Thirteen).
I've been avoiding using them because I was kinda scared people would get mad since I hadn't tagged them, but I did use them for this chapter, but if it's weird cause I didn't tag them, then I can edit it back to the cannon pronouns. I'm not too sure what the Ao3 etiquette for this kind of stuff is.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hizashi hadn't really paid any mind to the text Nedzu had sent him that Friday. He knew it was probably important but there were other things he had to be worried about, like the fact that Izuku was having nightmares every single day. He and Shouta wanted to ask Inui for advice, but they hadn't had the chance to bring it up to him, since it was the last week of the school year, classes were getting a lot more chaotic as students got excited, it was particularly bad for the third years who were getting ready for graduation. All the teachers had been scrambling around simply trying to keep the students in line during class, not that they were any better, the teachers' lounge was abuzz with activity, although everyone was thankfully toning things down from last year, all of the new teachers had finally gotten settled in since last year. Besides, Izuku was also in the teacher's lounge whenever they weren't in Nedzu's office, so everyone had to keep things relatively calm for their sake, not that anyone minded, they'd all gotten attached to the kid rather quickly, even though no-one other than Shouta and Hizashi knew much about them, at some point even Tanaka had left their spot at the cafeteria, which was an incredibly

rare occurrence, simply to say hello to Izuku.

All things considered it wasn't until Wednesday when he finally found out what that text was about, it was a routine staff meeting, Hizashi hadn't thought much about it. When he got to the meeting room Nedzu was seated at the head of the table, shuffling through some papers, he thought that was a bit odd, especially considering these meetings were usually just for everyone to talk about any issues they'd noticed with the students, like bullying or other troubling behaviour, as well as organize future tests and exams. Majima was already there as well as Takeda, he seemed to be purposefully ignoring whatever the principal was planning, Hizashi looked over at Majima questioningly, but xe just shook xyr head in shared confusion. The rest of the staff slowly filed in, and seemed just as confused as everyone else.

Finally once everyone had taken their seats, Nedzu started the meeting, and, it was just a normal meeting? What was he doing with those papers then? Why did some of those look like incident report files? What was going on? Was nobody going to mention the very clearly visible school files that looked nothing like the ones for UA? Hizashi could see almost everyone's eyes occasionally glance to the files, they were all curious, but then again, nobody dared to speak up if Nedzu wasn't going to bring them up. After the usual discussions had ended, Nedzu went right back to going through the files, and Anan decided to take one for the team and ask what had been on everyone's mind, because during the meeting Nedzu had been *distracted*. And whatever could actually take that much of his attention was something that everyone should probably be concerned about.

"Um, sir? What exactly are those files?" they asked, hesitantly, everyone's eyes turned to Nedzu and he just tilted his head at Hizashi and Shouta.

"I believe you two will have a clearer answer than I currently do" that was a particular surprise, since no, they had no idea what was going on.

Shouta shook his head "what are you talking about?"

"These are files on a certain school, Aldera Elementary, the school that Midoriya Izuku apparently attends."

Oh, *oh* Hizashi now completely understood why the principle had been so utterly distracted. Shouta had sat up straight at the mention of Izuku's name, they both knew what that meant, this was the school

whose teachers allowed children to get beaten up almost every day, and allowed one to almost be killed, just because they didn't have the strongest quirk, or in Izuku's case, no quirk at all. Apparently, their reaction was enough to warrant concern from everyone in the room.

Nemuri was the first person to speak up "okay, I'm gonna guess that the school isn't the best, considering both of your reactions".

"What?"

She shook her head in amusement "Shou, sweetie, you look like you're trying to glare a hole into the table."

Takeda huffed "I reckon it's bad enough to warrant an investigation and shut down if Nedzu's bein' all fussy about it" she said still not looking up from her own work. He'd been teaching at UA the longest out of any of them, so he had a pretty good knowledge of Nedzu's behaviour, the rest of them usually trusted whatever he said about the principal.

Nedzu had indeed investigated Izuku's place of education, and he could barely find anything on the school, not for lack of trying mind you, it appeared that, for whatever reason, the school simply did not keep any records. That would have been concerning enough, even if the files they *did* keep weren't lacklustre at best, and downright falsified at worst. How did Nedzu know they were falsified? He didn't, not for all of them, however there was one file he knew must have been full of lies. The student record for Midoriya Izuku, there were far too many marks on their record to make sense, and the reasons listed for disciplinary action was almost always that they were disruptive and constantly starting fights with the other students, a statement that fell apart the second you met them. Nedzu had observed his new student over the few days that he'd worked with them, they were the least confrontational person one could ever meet. They avoided other people like the plague and wouldn't cause a commotion if their life depended on it. Most of the reports were altercations between Izuku and another student named Bakugo Katsuki, a student whose file painted him as the perfect child, perfect grades, perfect behaviour, perfect *quirk*. That was what caught Nedzu's eye, looking back at Izuku's file he found various notes from their teachers about how their aggression was likely jealousy because the other children had quirks. Looking further into the student records he found a pattern that angered him the more he looked at it, without fail all the children who had what would be considered weak or villainous quirks had long histories of disciplinary action with condescending comments about

them being horrible children, while the students who had traditionally strong quirks had perfect records and were praised to the high heavens. Statistically that wasn't a possible outcome, the only logical explanation then was that the reports were incorrect, a result of biased teachers and a careless or malicious principal. Discrimination was something of a sore topic for Nedzu, what with his past, to think that an entire school of children were being hurt in this way, for not only was the school basically destroying the futures of the students they discriminated against, but they were also doing a major disservice to the students who weren't being guided properly because the teachers refused to correct any bad behaviour.

He hadn't intended to bring up the issue during this meeting, in fact he had planned to call a meeting at the last day of school to discuss the options. However he had gotten distracted, everyone had noticed that he had a new, *project* and while he could have simply ignored them, knowing that they wouldn't speak up against him if he shut them down quickly, it did present an interesting opportunity to close a minor hole in his plan. As predicted, Aizawa and Yamada had reacted immediately, even the people who weren't paying attention, namely Katou and Takeda, had quickly grown concerned due to the sheer rage that radiated off the both of them. Nedzu found it quite interesting how protective they were over Izuku, considering they claimed that they had found the child only last week, he suspected there was much more to that story than any of them had shared, however he somewhat understood that they wouldn't take kindly to him trying to get that information out of them, so he waited, the truth would reveal itself in due time.

Of course Takeda was the first person to recognize his intentions, she had hit the nail on the head, so to speak, although, depending on whatever Aizawa and Yamada could tell them, a few arrests might have to added to the list. "I had been investigating because I found it hard to believe that Izuku had not been further ahead in their education thanks to their intelligence. However I appear to have found an entirely different issue. It appears that the school has been letting quirkism run rampant in its halls, from looking through the records it appears that any children with 'undesirable' quirks are being given marks on their records for even minor infractions, while children with so called 'perfect' quirks have nothing but perfect records."

Suddenly the entire meeting room erupted into conversation, but Yamada and Aizawa looked minorly confused, Nedzu wasn't quite sure why, they had to have been expecting this given their reactions

earlier. “That’s, all?” Yamada asked, “are you sure that’s *everything* you could find?”

”Unfortunately the school doesn’t keep very many records, only the student files and expenses, everything else must be being handled under the table. Even the camera records are full of gaps where they clearly deleted footage. Why, is there something else we should know about?”

”It’s not just bias in the records the staff at the school actively encourage bullying and fighting, at least, from what Izuku has told us.”

That got reactions out of everyone, mainly anger, it was a lot of yelling until Inui finally managed to get everyone to shut up by barking as loudly as possible. “Look” he said “this is all awful and that school should be getting shut down, but don’t you think we should at least ask Izuku about it? They should be able to tell us everything, if they’re comfortable with that of course.”

It took a bit to convince everyone that bringing Izuku into the discussion wouldn’t be a terrible idea, but eventually Aizawa left to go get them from the teacher’s lounge. By the time he returned with Izuku the discussion had somewhat calmed down, everyone tried not to put too much attention on Izuku, they had all quickly learned that they started to panic if too many eyes were on them at once. They sat down in a spare chair that had been put next to Aizawa’s, they looked directly at Nedzu, ”what do you want to know?”

”First of all, I assume Aizawa-san filled you in on what we are discussing.” Izuku nodded.

”You want to investigate my school on the basis of quirk discrimination, right?”

”That about sums it up, I have found evidence that they are disciplining students differently depending on their quirks, however Yamada and Aizawa have mentioned that there is more I should be aware of?”

Izuku nodded, they started slowly signing, like they weren’t sure what to say, ”the teachers, I’m pretty sure they mess with kids’ grades if they think they’re higher or lower than what the kid ‘deserves’, and they accuse us of cheating if we get any marks too high. You get a mark on your record if they think you’re disturbing the class, for any reason, one time I saw a kid just tapping her desk and she got

detention for it, I think they just didn't like her because she had a 'villainous' quirk. And they don't care if you get told to kill yourself, actually, they might tell you themselves."

There was an uproar at that "Interesting, I believe Yamada-san also mentioned that physical violence was encouraged?"

"Don't you already know that from the camera footage?"

"Unfortunately there are, *conspicuous gaps* in the recordings, I suspect they purposefully delete the footage that shows any and all bullying."

"That, makes sense, anyway the kids with stronger quirks are encouraged to put other kids 'in their place' and it doesn't matter if a teacher is watching or not, cause they'll just ignore you, and you can't go to the nurses office either cause she might refuse to help you and then you get in trouble for wasting her time"

Nedzu saw Shuzenji visibly bristle at that, "that is illegal, nurses can't just refuse to treat someone like that, its grounds for getting her licence revoked."

"I'm sure we can add that to the list of evidence, I am curious though, what is the worst incident you can remember?" Nedzu knew that whatever he needed to launch that investigation would have to come from that.

Izuku paused for a second, genuinely trying to remember, they shook their head "maybe that time one of the upperclassmen broke a kid's arms and then they had to get through the entire day like that? I don't know, there's a lot of stuff that might count."

Yamada looked at them incredulously "what do you mean you don't know? What about what happened to you!? I'd say that's probably the worst thing that school let happen!"

"But, no-one's going to take that seriously, I'm quirkless!"

Nedzu cleared his throat "I assure you I can make them care, what happened?"

Izuku looked doubtful of Nedzu's claim, but explained nonetheless "Well, that one time, I think I almost got killed by my classmates? And the teachers might have encouraged them?"

You could have heard a pin drop in that room after that revelation.

Kan hesitantly spoke up “what do you mean ‘almost’? How did you survive?” it asked.

Izuku was silent for a bit ”I managed to get away from them, I collapsed behind a dumpster, that’s when Aizawa and Yamada saved me.” Well, that wasn’t exactly how Nedzu expected to find out why the two of them had been so vague about how Izuku had ended up in their care. ”I think Shuzenji-san could tell you all the injuries I had.” Nedzu noted that Shuzenji’s eyes widened a bit.

”You mean that all those injuries were caused by your classmates?” She asked incredulously, Izuku nodded. “Kid, the only reason you lived is thanks to my quirk working instantly, if you had taken any longer to be healed even that little bit, you would have died that night.” Even Yamada and Aizawa seemed shocked by this, had they not realised how dire Izuku’s situation had been?

Everyone was silent for a long while. Nedzu simply nodded “right, well that is certainly enough of an incident to warrant launching an investigation.” That simple response opened the metaphorical floodgates, everyone was talking over each other now, most were calling for an immediate shut down of the school, Nedzu was sure he even heard someone, probably Majima, suggest arson.

”Quiet” he said calmly. Instantly the silence returned to the room. “I can guarantee, I will not let this school or its staff get away with light punishment, they certainly will suffer, however I need time to build up the case, because there are no camera records I will have to monitor the cameras myself and catch any instance of improper conduct before they delete it. Luckily, if it occurs as frequently as Izuku claims, then I should have a proper case against them by the week’s end, which also means I will have it shut down before the next school year starts, meaning no students will be displaced during the school year.”

Everyone seemed satisfied by that answer, but there was still one thing Nedzu needed to cover, that minor hole in his plan “however, there is a minor issue, while I’m sure most of the students would be able to find schools that won’t discriminate against them, Izuku is still quirkless, anywhere they go they will likely be harshly bullied and wouldn’t get the education they require. That is the one detail I have not figured out yet.”

Izuku knew that Nedzu was right, there was no-way they’d ever be treated fairly by any school they tried to attend, they were about to

say that it was fine, when Ishiyama spoke up “I don’t know what you’d do about other subjects, but I’d be happy to teach them Literature.”

Izuku was shocked, sure they had become, somewhat friendly, with the UA staff, but they never expected that one of them would offer to teach them! And soon it wasn’t just one, as all the other teachers chorused their agreement. Izuku could feel their eyes watering a bit as they heard everyone speak. Nedzu turned to them “well? It seems that we have a solution to your education predicament right here, do you agree?” Izuku nodded gratefully, still unable to comprehend what had just happened.

”Then it’s settled, I shall let all of you know when the formal investigation commences.”

Izuku realised in that moment, that their little bubble of safety had just expanded by nine, and they couldn’t be happier.

Chapter End Notes

And so begins, the rise of the genius green bean.

Chapter 21: Bye bye Aldera!

Chapter Summary

Time for consequences!

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue
Signed and Spoken Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Nedzu watched the screen, beady eyes flitting around, watching files be cleaned, camera footage be erased, any trace of educational negligence wiped clean from the records. All the while a small handful of people scrambled to clean hallways and classrooms, scrubbing away dried blood, hiding burn marks, moving around damaged lockers, getting rid of heavily damaged tables and chairs, all to appear, for a single day, as an upstanding place of education. But Aldera Elementary was a corrupt school and no matter how much they tried to hide it, he would know, and he would tear them down, brick by bloodstained brick. It had been only a month since he began his investigation, and normally that shouldn't have been nearly enough time to build up a case against the school staff, however he had spent almost all his free time watching the cameras of Aldera for any sign of illegal activity. Some might call his methods, *extreme*, however nobody would argue that he didn't get results, besides, it was almost too easy to find what he was looking for, it was a miracle the school hadn't been investigated before. Now the next step of Nedzu's plan commenced, he had contacted some acquaintances who could get the school shut down from an educational standpoint, and he might have let it rest there, had it not been for the fact that some of the things the staff had done were outright criminal, and they practiced quirk discrimination. If there was one thing Nedzu couldn't stand it was quirk discrimination. He had made a call to Tsukauchi, the one person he could fully trust to not throw out the whole case just because the children being hurt didn't have traditionally good quirks. So as it currently stood the new school year was just a day away and the school was under heavy review, and was likely to either be shut down or entirely restaffed, while any staff who could be arrested were being quietly rounded up by Tsukauchi and the police. The board of education had, of course, informed all the students' families that

Aldera Elementary might not be open for this year, hopefully it was enough time for those parents to find new schools for their children.

The door to the office creaked open and Izuku walked in, they sat down in a chair next to his, eyes glued to the monitor, even though it was already past the end of the school year and nobody should have been inside the school grounds, Nedzu had made an exception for Izuku, despite their previous concerns about the investigation, they had been insistent on at least being able to witness the results. And today was the day that they truly made their move, one last step, one meeting that would seal the fate of this wretched place. A meeting with the Principal of Aldera Elementary as well as a select few members of staff, the one conducting the meeting was one of his contacts in the local Board of Education, as much as Nedzu would have loved to go down there himself and put the fear of god in that crooked man, he would have attracted far too much attention, given that his name and position as a hero held quite a bit of power, people's attention would be drawn if they found out that a pro hero was part of an investigation into a school. In fact, that was why the only hero that was going to be at the meeting was Aizawa, he was unknown enough as an underground hero that his presence wouldn't ring any alarm bells. He was going both in case something went awry, as well as the simple reason that Aizawa is an incredibly stubborn man, and he refused to be kept out of this particular part of the plan, Nedzu suspected he just wanted to be able to torment the staff who had made life so torturous for Izuku.

Izuku had mixed feelings about the whole operation, sure this school had made their life hell, and certainly deserved to be shut down, but they couldn't help but feel like they were doing something wrong. Like they shouldn't be happy that the school was getting shut down, especially considering that it was their fault, none of this would have happened if they hadn't told their mentors about what the school was doing. They could imagine their old teachers' reactions, yelling at them, telling them that they should have just kept their mouth shut, after all, the school was doing so much good for most of its students, what did it matter if a few suffered? But they had spent years interrupting fights and shielding the other kids whenever they could, they saw exactly how many people were being hurt by the might-makes-right mentality that the teachers practically drilled into your head. And Nedzu had explained to them that even the kids who seemed to be on top were going to suffer horribly later in life if they were allowed to continue down this path.

Still, as they watched the camera feed with great anticipation, some

part of them, buried deep in their mind, long forgotten and crushed under the weight of the expectation for them to be meek and forgiving to all who cause them pain, felt joy, a sick sense of joy at watching the people who had wronged them so horribly get exactly what they deserved. Perhaps it was wrong for them to feel that way, even so, they were looking forward to seeing their old principal's face as he would try to worm his way out only to be presented with all the recordings that Nedzu had spent so long patiently obtaining. Their eyes snapped to the entrance camera feed as two people entered the building, one was Aizawa and the other was a friend of Nedzu's, even from through the screen they could tell that both of them were tense. Time to see how well this meeting would go.

Shouta's gaze flitted around the hallways as they walked into Aldera Elementary, beside him Nedzu's contact, a person with a quirk that gave her dove wings named Shiratori, silently tutted to herself as she examined the building with mild disdain, their feathers ruffled as they noted down all the poorly hidden damage. Shouta would bet that most of it came from students using their untrained quirks and accidentally hitting walls and doors, although he noted that a few lockers seemed to have much more damage than the rest or were oddly missing, he could guess who those lockers belonged to, he could have even sworn he saw a bloodstain on one of the floorboards, and knowing what happened here, that was probably a reasonable assumption.

The principal's office seemed to be completely pristine, as expected, the principal himself was a plain looking man, the kind of plain that even if you met him a hundred times you still wouldn't recognize him in a crowd, Shouta wondered if that was his quirk, or if he was just that boring. There were three other teachers in the room as well. Everyone looked relaxed, smug even, he could have sworn he saw two of the teachers silently laughing and talking amongst themselves, only the principal seemed nervous, likely because he was the one who knew exactly how much scrutiny the school was being put under. Of course, not even the principal had any reason to suspect anything too unusual, since as far as they were concerned they were just meeting with an official from the board of education. Shouta was here under the pretence of being Shiratori's assistant, a little white lie just to ensure that nobody would be on high alert during the meeting, the more relaxed they were, the more likely they were going to slip up.

Shiratori sat across from the principal while Shouta remained standing, purposefully putting himself right next to the door to prevent anyone from leaving. Was he being paranoid? Maybe, but he wasn't taking any chances with this meeting, they had to seal the deal

now, or the whole investigation would be delayed a full year, luckily they had what they needed, thanks to Nedzu, the laptop in Shouta's bag contained all of the recordings they'd need to shut down the whole school. Shiratori began the discussion with some idle small talk that Shouta couldn't be bothered to listen to, he knew what she was doing, she was making herself seem approachable, letting the principal drop his guard. After all, they were a friend of Nedzu's, of course they knew how to manipulate their way into people's hearts and get them to spill their deepest secrets. Shouta tuned back in once they finally got to the topic at hand, signalled by Shiratori subtly turning on a small audio recorder that was attached to her sleeve.

"Well Shiratori-San, I can tell you right now that our school does its best to care for each and every one of our students" the principal said with a sickeningly sweet grin, Shouta had to bite his tongue, there would be time to tear them apart later, for now they needed to get him to dig his own grave.

"I'm sure you do, however I would like to ask a few questions regarding the way you run this school, could you give me an overview of the disciplinary systems in place here?" Right, they both knew exactly how the school disciplined their students, which is to say, not at all, not when they really needed disciplining at least. Shiratori had been given a copy of the camera footage to go through, just so that they knew what to ask about.

"Well we do what any other school does, if a student is out of line we give them detention, or call their parents" lies, Nedzu had checked, there had been no phone calls made during the days that he had observed the school. "And if the behaviour continues we are forced to suspend the student or even expel them" of course what he didn't mention was the fact that suspensions were only ever given to students with "undesirable" quirks.

"Of course, but what kinds of things would you consider out of line?" Fishing for answers, if Shiratori didn't give a suggestion, then the principal would have to answer from his own morals, and he'd probably slip up and forget to mention something.

"Disturbing the class, cheating on tests, you know, normal things."

"Really? I find it odd that you didn't mention bullying in that list, you do discourage bullying, right?"

"Yes yes, of course! We don't tolerate the harassment of students!"

”So if a member of staff saw a child being hurt they would step in immediately?” Shouta could see the principal’s face drop for a split second, he was starting to suspect, unfortunately for him, it was far too late to back down. Shouta flashed a grin at him, his deranged grin that struck fear into the hearts of anyone who saw it, it was quite effective at unnerving criminals and students alike. The principal’s face paled, as did the rest of the teachers, who were slowly backing away from where Shouta was standing. Maybe he was enjoying their fear a little too much, but honestly who could blame him? Criminals like them needed a bit of fear in their hearts, besides, it was always fun to see just how long it took for people to crack. Then again he figured he should stop, for now, Shiratori still had to get the information she needed, and that wouldn’t be possible if everyone was too unnerved to speak.

”W-well, yes, we would step in” the principal’s voice had gotten much higher, it almost sounded squeaky.

”Oh? Then if we looked through the camera footage, we wouldn’t find any instance of a teacher watching a child get bullied? And certainly no instance of a teacher encouraging it?”

The principal seemed to become much more confident for that question, no doubt assuming that they would go through the footage that already existed, which would exclude the deleted footage, unfortunately for him, this confidence was far too misplaced. “Of course! We can pull up the footage now if you like! Maki-San, if you would kindly-“

”That won’t be necessary” Shiratori cut him off, “my assistant and I have already gathered some footage, we can just watch that, after all it would save everyone the hassle, wouldn’t it?” They smiled sweetly, but her wings were puffed up threateningly.

Shouta pulled the laptop from the bag he’d brought, and set it on the table, opening it to show a video of the camera feeds, playing it revealed a compilation of instances in which a teacher or other member of staff watched and/or encouraged bullying and fighting. “I think it’s clear that you’ve done nothing but lie to us, isn’t it?” Shiratori asked the principal, smiling all the while. The principal quivered in his seat, too afraid to say anything to the contrary.

One of the teachers, Maki, was apparently too stupid to take the hint “you can’t call that bullying, those students are simply defending themselves from those evil children!” she said, in reference to a kid

with a ‘villainous’ quirk being attacked by three other students. That was it, Shouta was done with this whole situation, screw staying quiet, he was going to give this lady a piece of his mind.

”Really? Because from what I see, it’s three kids beating up their classmate while a teacher encourages them, truly, you think a child as young as that even has the capacity to be evil? What are they? Seven years old? Its people like you who are the real villains, just a shame that you are too up your own ass to see it, you stupid, good for nothing, stains on humanity.” Shouta didn’t raise his voice once, they weren’t worth the effort of yelling, instead used an icier tone of voice that certainly caused all of the teachers to cower even further into the corner, even the principal looked like he had just been slapped.

Shiratori smiled and continued speaking, sealing the fate of Aldera Elementary “this meeting was only a formality, this school will be getting shut down, there was no question about that from the beginning, this was just to warn all of you to get your affairs in order, as I don’t think any of you will be teaching anyone after this.”

The two of them promptly left the building, Shiratori left to finish the paperwork needed to get everything done, while Shouta was met at the gates by Hizashi who immediately asked for details, Shouta just laughed and said to wait until they got home.

Izuku had slowly felt their eyes start to water as they watched the footage, Nedzu had been mildly concerned but they assured him they were crying happy tears, that wasn’t really true, honestly, they were more relived than happy. Even after knowing Aizawa for months now, they were still surprised when he snapped at Maki-sensei. When their guardians came to pick them up they hugged Aizawa tightly. They left for home only after Yamada made Nedzu promise to give him a copy of that footage.

”Well, how’d it go?” Yamada asked once they got home.

”Well enough, you should have seen the principal’s face when he realised just how screwed he was.”

Izuku felt their eyes start to water again, thinking of how much their mentors had done for them over the months they’d known them.

”Little listener? Are you okay?”

Izuku just hugged both of their mentors and cried.

”Izuku!?” Aizawa sounded concerned “what’s wrong?”

Izuku shook their head ”happy tears.” And this time they really were, for the first time in five, long years, they cried for joy.

Chapter End Notes

I know it wasn't quite the dramatic burning at the stake I'm sure most of you imagined, but Aldera is officially gone for good!

Chapter 22: First day observations

Chapter Summary

> The first day of school is always the most chaotic, and not always because of the students.

Chapter Notes

> --- : POV switch

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The new school year meant that UA's halls would be filled with chatter as new students entered the building for the first time, but even before the students arrived there was a certain level of energy that permeated the air, most of the teachers were prepared for dealing with the new first years, Nedzu was making sure everything was set up for orientation, Shuzenji was preparing the infirmary for the inevitable influx of idiotic students injuring themselves or each other, and Izuku somehow got caught up in it all. They found themself scrambling around the teacher's lounge avoiding the adults running around and getting papers organized, it was the first time they'd seen the other teachers since that staff meeting last month. In the meantime, they'd been spending most of their time at the apartment, or sometimes at the nearby park with their guardians. Seeing as they didn't have much to do, and no friends, other than Tenya who had visited a few times, don't get them wrong, Tenya was a really good friend, but he was only one person after all. They had gotten to UA early with their guardians, their bright yellow backpack (they had refused to allow Yamada to buy them a new one, no matter how much he asked) now filled not just with their notebooks but also with some textbooks, Yamada had gotten them so that Izuku could restart their schooling as soon as possible, it was a simple plan really, Izuku would spend the majority of their time in the teacher's lounge studying, with help from whatever teachers were free at the moment, Fridays would be their analysis lessons with Nedzu.

Izuku had also asked Aizawa about their physical training, they hadn't kept up with their training since the incident and, other than that one time, they hadn't gone out as their vigilante persona either, he had tried to argue the point, and It took a few days of pestering, but he eventually conceded that they could join him for patrols occasionally, as long as they didn't actually fight anyone. Izuku had barely

contained their excitement during that conversation, they had seen plenty of their new neighbourhood in the daytime, but they hadn't really had a chance to see it at night. Was there a high chance of Nedzu probably making the connection between them and the vigilante following Eraserhead around? Definitely. Izuku suspected that it would take about a month if they were being generous, but was that really going to stop them? Not a chance.

For now they had somehow made their way to the corner of the room without getting tangled in whatever the heck everyone else was doing, even if the amount of talking was making it rather difficult to tell where everyone was at any given time, and everyone was moving about sporadically, and they were fairly certain someone threw a stapler across the room at some point. To be fair, these *were* all pro heroes, they were likely being careful not to let Izuku get hurt, but honestly from the outside the teacher's lounge probably looked like a whirlwind of chaos. Although from their spot in the corner, Izuku could appreciate the surprising efficiency of the situation. Their spot consisted of a small desk and chair that had been dragged out of storage, they could have used the couch but they appreciated having their own designated area.

They hadn't really gotten a good look at the organized chaos earlier, but at the moment, they could see Majima looking over xyr students' work while also acting as a translator for Takeda who seemed to have begun speaking almost exclusively in cowboy slang while glaring at some papers, meanwhile Kayama, Yamada and Katou were done with their work and started talking with each other and writing down what looked like bets on a whiteboard, and Aizawa and Kan were comparing student files and discussing the listed quirks, or maybe they were arguing, honestly they couldn't tell, Kurose was sitting at their desk and throwing paper airplanes at anyone that moved. Ishiyama and Inui seemed to be staying out of the chaos for the most part, but Izuku could see them quietly start setting up a whiteboard that had each teacher's name with a set of tally marks next to it, the top of the board read "**Chaos caused this year**", how any of the teachers had caused incidents on the first day was beyond Izuku, but the teachers with tallies next to their names were Aizawa and Kan with one each, probably one of their petty arguments, Takeda with two, likely for the sheer amount of incomprehensible slang he was using, and Kurose with one, probably for the paper airplanes.

However things soon calmed down once Nedzu dropped from the vents to remind everyone that orientation was beginning soon, it was almost unnerving, the hush that settled over the room as everyone

filed out of the room. Izuku took it as an opportunity to start on their studies without all the chaos to distract them, while they found it fascinating how everyone seemed to be able to function even with everything going on, it was certainly something they would have to get used to.

Most of the day went by rather smoothly, Izuku would be studying, and whichever teacher was in the room would help with whatever subject they could in between doing their own work. In fact, Izuku found themself rather enjoying their studies, which was unusual even for them, or, perhaps it wasn't that unusual, they had always loved to learn new things, and really when they thought about it, they were only miserable at school because of the teachers and the other students. At least their new teachers were nice and, whenever they talked to them, Izuku even got to learn some things about them, like how Katou lost his legs to a villain when he was first starting out as a hero, or that Kurose's mother was an astronaut and their costume was a tribute to her, some things were smaller details of course, like Ishiyama liking sweets, Kayama having a collection of stuffed animals, and Takeda doing wood carving as a hobby.

Their notebook was off to the side, slowly being filled with little facts about the heroes, of course, all of the additions were written entirely in code. They had been practicing over the month and they had already gotten the hang of writing in it, they couldn't do it as effortlessly as normal however, which caused a bit of a predicament when their thoughts went by faster than they could write them, their current solution was writing down their immediate thoughts in Japanese, and then translating them later, of course they would destroy the copy in Japanese afterwards. They had begun translating their existing entries into the code as well, beginning with the entries on their teachers.

Nedzu observed his student from the vents, Izuku truly was a fascinating human, they had gone through what should have been an entire week's worth of subject matter in a single day, it seemed that when they had the opportunity to indulge in their studies without hinderance they were quite the fast learner, of course, Nedzu didn't intend to let them get by just reading textbooks, but it appeared that he would have to adjust the contents of the surprize tests he had been preparing. It had been quite a while since he had gotten personally involved in a students' development, seven years to be precise, although he might argue that even Aizawa hadn't caught his attention quite like this. Yes, if Izuku continued at this pace Nedzu fully expected that they would move on to a middle school curriculum

within the year.

It appeared that the rest of his staff had also gotten incredibly attached to Izuku, that was obvious enough when they had all agreed to assist in their education, however it was interesting to catch snippets of conversation as he scampered around in the vents throughout the school, every time he passed by the teacher’s lounge he heard at least one of the teachers sharing knowledge and stories with Izuku. Of course he would have to remind them that any information about himself and his methods was not to be shared, he had a reputation to maintain after all, he couldn’t be an omniscient creature without a little trickery after all, and if one of those methods was hiding in the vents to eavesdrop on people, well, only he and his staff would know. Maybe someday he would teach his ways to Izuku, he suspected that they would make a terrifying hero if they had the right knowledge, they were keen, and already knew how to disappear in a crowd, if they wished, criminals would fear them like they feared him, if only they shed that meek attitude, it was so clearly only surface level, but perhaps even they hadn’t realised that yet.

Chapter End Notes

> a bit of a short chapter to catch up with Izuku and witness some chaos in the teacher's lounge. Hope y'all enjoyed!

Chapter 23: Back on patrol

Chapter Summary

Izuku and Aizawa patrol together.
Ft. a very tired detective

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku pulled the the mask over their face, checking that they had everything they needed once more before climbing out of their window and onto the fire escape, from there it was easy to parkour onto the roof where Aizawa was waiting, finally, their first patrol in a month and a half, it had been far too long in their opinion and they were eager to stretch their legs. Maybe this didn't quite count as a patrol, since they wouldn't actually be fighting anyone, Aizawa had refused to let them on account of them being unarmed, the sign pole they'd been using previously had been lost when they moved out of the warehouse, and while they did have a pocket knife on them for emergencies, they were far from skilled with bladed weapons. Another concern had been for their sleep schedule, but honestly it wasn't like they got any sleep normally, and besides there was always the option of coffee, they paused in their tracks at that thought, maybe Yamada was right, they really were taking too much influence from Aizawa. Oh well.

They took one last jump and landed right next to Aizawa who barely acknowledged their presence before he took off across the rooftops, Izuku quickly followed, easily keeping pace with him as the pair dashed across the city. Oh how they missed this feeling, the cold of the night, the air rushing past them, the silence and darkness perfect for going unnoticed, the feel of their feet hitting the concrete of the rooftops, it was comforting in an odd sense, despite not being quite the same it was still familiar, running across concrete roofs, jumping from fire escapes, landing on dumpsters, they darted along with practiced ease. Eraser was always one step ahead of them, following a path long etched into his mind, while Izuku's movements were far more chaotic as they had always been, it was easy, comfortable even, for the two of them to slip back into their old dynamic, not mentor

and student, or guardian and child, but rather hero and vigilante, Eraserhead and Wraith. They always felt much more confident as Wraith than they ever did as Izuku, so patrol mostly consisted of them sassing and poking fun at Eraser.

Izuku noted, somewhere in their mind, that they'd never actually gotten to appreciate just how much of a skilled fighter Eraser was, usually they were either fighting with him or sparring against him, so watching him take effortlessly down a pair of muggers was just a bit mesmerising. They sat on the rooftop, staring down at the fight, if it could even be called that, Eraser had the first mugger tied up in his capture scarf before either of them could even blink and the other was knocked out just as swiftly, the person they were trying to mug had already called the police and ran away. Eraser climbed back onto the rooftop after securing both muggers. Izuku couldn't wait until the day when they could take down criminals like that, when they became a hero they were gonna be just like Eraser, taking down the bad guys before they can even react! Their mind went full nerd mode as they analysed the fight in their head, mostly because even though they had practically memorized Eraser's fighting style by now, there was one thing they still had yet to figure out, how did he control his capture weapon? They had asked before, probably one of the first questions they'd asked him when they began training, he had assured them that there was no technology involved, nor a quirk effect, and that the scarf was made from steel alloy and carbon fibre, not regular cloth. Izuku suspected that it was a series of hand movements that allowed the scarf to move like it did, but they were likely incredibly minute as it was almost never obvious, even when Izuku had spent an entire sparring session focusing just on Aizawa's hands to see if they could spot it. They wondered how long it took him to master the weapon, probably at least a year.

Patrol went smoothly for a little while, but soon enough something went awry, at this point Izuku figured they just had terrible luck, they had been standing on a rooftop overlooking an alleyway as Eraser battled a group of drug dealers (that kind of thing was getting far too common for some reason), and one of them tried to escape by climbing the fire escape, right onto the roof where they were. With Eraser occupied with the rest of the group, there was nobody to stop the dealer as she immediately charged at Izuku, she must have had a transformer quirk because one second they were facing a petite looking woman and the next they were facing what looked like a werewolf, Izuku dodged the charge easily, however that didn't stop the lady from trying to run away, leaving them with only one option. They knew they shouldn't do this, Eraser had specifically forbidden

them from fighting anybody, but if they didn't, the criminal was gonna get away and surely stopping that was worth the risk? They made that decision in the split second they needed to doge a claw swipe, and they quickly took the pocket knife out of their pocket, and slashed out, barely grazing the criminal's arm. She turned around and once again tried to swipe at them, her reflexes were fast, really fast, probably thanks to her quirk, they almost got hit several times before an opportunity presented itself and they managed to hit her on the head with the knife's handle, swinging with all their might, which wasn't really that much. They could have just stabbed her, it certainly would have been more efficient, but that would have been unnecessary, and it was way more brutal than they were willing to go. Instead the hit stunned her for a few seconds, and all that stalling was plenty of time for Eraser to show up and restrain her with his scarf.

Shouta quickly knocked out the criminal before turning to Wraith, he had to make sure they weren't hurt, he double and triple checked that they in fact, weren't injured, after all, they were always good at hiding their injuries, but they were fine, which was a relief, but on the other hand. "Wraith! What on earth were you thinking!?" As relived as he was that they weren't hurt, he was also incredibly annoyed at the reckless stunt they'd pulled "didn't I specifically tell you *not* to fight anybody if you could avoid it!?".

"Well, she would have gotten away! And, it wouldn't be right if I just stood by and let her run!"

"But you could have gotten seriously hurt! Especially since you only have that pocket knife to defend yourself!"

"Isn't that okay? It doesn't matter as long as a hero gets the villain! Right? And it really doesn't matter if *I* get hurt, I can deal with a lot of pain after all!" Shouta stared at Wraith in disbelief, were they really trying to argue this point? He thought they'd gotten past that! How many times had he explained that just because they *could* tolerate getting hurt, didn't mean they should!?

"Kid, seriously, listen to me, capturing a criminal, especially one this petty, is not worth your life or any major injury for that matter" Shouta started pacing, fully intending to sternly lecture Wraith about putting their life in danger for no reason.

"But it's a hero's job to catch criminals, and they put themselves at risk all the time to do it!"

Shouta stopped and looked at Izuku, he sighed, typical, the kid had no sense of self-preservation anyways, as long as they thought they were doing something to help people, they never cared what happened to them. He knelt down in front of them, putting a hand on their shoulder and looking them dead in the eye “you’re right, it’s a hero’s job to catch criminals, and it’s a hero’s job to risk getting hurt, but you’re not a hero, not yet, right now you’re still a kid, and it’s not your job to put yourself in harm’s way just to stop a crime, understood?”

Izuku nodded after a few seconds, which was far too much hesitation in Shouta’s opinion, but at least he knew that they wouldn’t try that again, he stood back up and looked over at the lady who was slumped over, unconscious. He ended up dragging her back into the alleyway, this was one of the situations that he would wait for the cops, probably accompanied by detective Tsukauchi, that man handled far more cases that he was paid to. And the police had been especially concerned about the increase in criminal activity, particularly drug deals, Shouta figured that it was probably just a wave of people getting desperate and turning to less than legal means to find money, there *had* been some major villain attacks in the area, and that usually caused quite a bit of financial trouble for any people who get caught in the crossfire.

Soon enough the sirens of police cars filled the night air, Shouta turned to Wraith, expecting them to run away, but they were just standing there, they pulled their mask down for a second and gave him a wild grin, oh, they wanted to cause trouble, Shouta gave them an equally wild grin in return, if they were going to make some mischief, well, he wasn’t going to stop them, he did feel mildly sorry for the poor sap who had to take this report, only mildly. Wraith pulled their mask back over their face and snuck into the shadows just across from where Shouta was standing.

Naomasa noticed something odd the second he got out of the car, the scene was pretty normal, a bunch of people tied up and unconscious, and Eraserhead standing off to the side, trying not to be noticed. Hero reports, particularly the ones concerning underground heroes, were things that often got handed off to Naomasa, he was one of the few cops that seemed to be trusted by almost all the undergrounders in Musutafu, so he had the unfortunate pleasure of dealing with all of the cases concerning the less social ones, which included Eraserhead. Meaning that while the other officers handcuffed and arrested the criminals, he was stuck with talking to a grumpy hero who would probably disappear whenever he felt like. Walking closer he could see

that Eraserhead was actually talking to someone, although, Naomasa couldn't see anybody in the alleyway.

"Hey Eraser, what happened?"

"Deal gone wrong" of course he was as curt as ever.

"Right, by the way, who were you talking to just now?" Naomasa asked, surely he wasn't talking into thin air, right? Eraserhead just looked at a spot behind Naomasa, but when he turned around, there was no-one there, he turned back to Eraserhead, fully questioning the hero's sanity, and there was someone else standing right next to him. Naomasa stumbled backwards in surprise, the other figure was short, wearing a green hoodie and a pair of bright red shoes. Wait, where had he heard that description before?

"Eraser, uh, is that…"

"Oh, right, Tsukauchi, meet Wraith", the vigilante gave him an enthusiastic wave.

Wraith, the vigilante who had been active for years, only to disappear off the face of the earth last month without a trace, also this was several blocks outside of their previous range. Naomasa wanted explanations, "and why exactly is a vigilante having a friendly conversation with you?" he could already feel a headache forming behind his eyes.

"I'm keeping an eye on them" the statement rung true but did nothing to clear up Naomasa's ever growing confusion.

"So you're not going to arrest them?"

"Nope, but they'll be patrolling with me from now on, so get used to seeing them around" the bottle of whiskey hidden away in his office was looking more enticing by the second.

"Right, okay, got it" he did his best not to focus on the vigilante as he took the report of the crime, then, as soon as he was done, both Eraserhead and Wraith disappeared into the night. Naomasa stared at the alleyway where they were previously standing, he was absolutely not paid enough for this.

Chapter End Notes

Tsukauchi doesn't even know half of the chaos he's going to get

with these two, poor guy needs a raise for putting up with everyone's bullshit.

The entire scene from Tsuka's POV was just:
Tsuka: "Whatcha got there?"
Aizawa, acting like nothing is out of the ordinary: "A vigilante"

Chapter 24: A rat in the vents

Chapter Summary

Nedzu teaches Izuku about the ways of the vents.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku woke up a little slower than normal, which is to say, not instantly, usually they would have shot awake in the aftermath of one nightmare or another, but it seemed that whatever hand of fate there was had decided to give them a break. Maybe soon they'd finally be able to stop having so many nightmares, although they knew better than to truly hope, their guardians had been talking with Inui about getting them some therapy, but in the meantime, Izuku just resorted to dealing with it the way they always had, distracting themself long enough to stop thinking about it. To be fair to Aizawa and Yamada, they weren't aware of most of the nightmares Izuku was having, seeing as they would happen almost every day without fail, Izuku saw no need to trouble anybody with the tame ones. The only times their guardians would know of their nightmares would be if they were particularly disturbing, not really because Izuku would tell them, more so because even they couldn't stop themself from crying when those ones happened.

They eventually got themself to get up and get dressed, then wandered into the kitchen, greeting both Shadow and Mop on the way, the latter of which kept meowing as loud as she possibly could until they relented and sat down to pet her, she was probably mad that they had the gall to wake up a few minutes late and thus miss the usual time that they'd play with her, and Shadow whenever she decided to show up. They still couldn't believe it had been over two months since they started living here, it had taken a while for them to get used to the apartment, in all honesty it was only around week ago that they finally stopped expecting to wake up back at the warehouse, but now they could probably navigate the place blindfolded, provided that the cats didn't get in the way. They walked into the kitchen, Aizawa was already up and drinking coffee, Yamada would take a little longer to wake up as usual so they'd have to wait for breakfast

since Aizawa was forbidden from touching anything in the kitchen that wasn't the coffee maker, they hadn't seen him try to cook anything but Yamada had told them once that the last time he did the kitchen almost got burnt down.

"Morning kid" Aizawa looked up from his coffee cup tiredly, neither of them were morning people, it's just that they woke up early anyways, in Aizawa's case it was because he had work to do, in Izuku's it was that they wanted to avoid their nightmares.

"Morning Aizawa" Izuku had to stifle a yawn as they grabbed a cup and filled it to the brim with coffee.

Aizawa huffed in amusement "finish that before Hizashi wakes up would you? He's already concerned about my coffee drinking habits, he might hide the coffee maker entirely if he finds out you've been drinking that much."

Izuku nodded, Yamada had given up trying to entirely stop them from drinking coffee, but he was sure to get a heart attack if he saw them drinking what might be considered a completely absurd amount of it. Aizawa hadn't tried to stop them at all, just smiled and showed them how to operate the coffee maker, much to the chagrin of Yamada who kept loudly complaining about how he would have to deal with two coffee addicts in the house.

The first thing Hizashi saw when he walked into the kitchen was Izuku having a staring contest with Shadow, it was adorable really, Shadow was just standing on the counter and looking at them unblinkingly like the good void she was, while their face was all scrunched up in concentration as they did their best to keep their eyes open, meanwhile Shouta was doing his best not to laugh and startle the two. Hizashi took the opportunity to snap a picture of the scene without being noticed before getting started on breakfast.

It was only a little while ago that he had noticed Izuku really settling in, not that they weren't before, but now they seemed particularly comfortable, they had stopped getting jumpy whenever someone walked into the same room as them. And they were far more receptive to physical affection, like the random headpats that Shouta would give them every time he walked past, or Hizashi's habit of constantly hugging them, Hizashi's phone also had several pictures of them cuddled up on the couch with the cats and/or Shouta after a long day. They were also getting less and less overprotective of their notebooks, at least around Hizashi and Shouta, even leaving the books alone

entirely when previously they would have taken them everywhere they went just to make sure nothing bad happened. They still had a long way to go of course, but even these little things were vast improvements compared to how they were earlier.

By the time they had finished breakfast Izuku was already telling him about their newest analysis, they had showed him the page in their notebook, but quickly realised that Hizashi couldn't understand a single word in there thanks to that code that Nedzu had helped them create. They continued talking about it anyways and asked him if he'd ever met that particular hero, if he could tell them what they were like, if they were as nice as they seemed, or if he'd ever seen their quirk used a certain way, and even more questions that he was barely able to keep track of, he did the best he could to answer them but each question answered gave rise to three more and eventually Shouta had to practically drag both of them out to the car or else they'd be late.

Izuku sat at their desk in the teacher's lounge, switching between studying and translating their analyses, they were determined to finish translating everything before their next lesson with Nedzu. They also spent quite a bit of their time observing the teachers as usual, and all the expected silliness that came with them, although there was one thing that had been bugging them for a while now. They set their maths textbook down and walked over to the couch to talk to Inui, who would always hang out in the teacher's lounge before classes started, despite the fact that he didn't even have a desk in here and usually either sat on the couch or stood near Kan's desk.

Inui was currently in a conversation with Kayama but he looked up when he heard them approaching "hey Izuku, got a question?"

"Why are you in here?"

Inui looked a bit confused "I'm sorry, what do you mean by that?"

"You're the guidance counsellor right? Why are you in the teacher's lounge? Shuzenji-San and Tanaka-San don't stay here"

"… Reasons"

For some reason Inui's response caused Kayama to giggle wildly, Inui growled softly at her, but either she didn't get the warning or just didn't care because she pointed towards where Kan was seated "reason number one" she signed, winking at Izuku like she was telling

a secret that she shouldn't.

"They don't need to know that" Inui's voice sounded strained, like he was embarrassed about something, Izuku wasn't sure what exactly was going on but they figured they should probably drop it if Kayama was looking that excited to talk about it so they excused themself and returned to their desk to continue with their studies, making a note in their notebook to check for a possible connection between Inui and Kan.

After some time Izuku decided to get some more translating done, they had just finished with the last one from Analysis #8 when they heard it, the soft sound of something sharp skittering over metal. If the room were any kind of busy they might not have heard it, luckily most of the teachers were in class, leaving Ishiyama as the only one in the lounge, and he was quietly sitting at his desk, reading a novel, you could have heard a pin drop in the room. At first they were confused, what on earth would be making a noise like that? Then they realised that the source of the noise was above them, they looked up and their eyes narrowed in on the vent grate in the ceiling, after all, there wasn't any other metal surface in the room. Was something in the vents? They racked their brain for a bit, trying to think of what could be up there, then they remembered that Nedzu had a habit of dropping into rooms from the vents, was he watching from there too?

"Nedzu-San?"

The vent grate popped open and a furry paw waved at them from the ceiling.

"What are you doing?"

Nedzu dropped down from the vents "gathering information, what else?"

"Information? You mean you were spying on people? From the vents? How did you get in there?" They were incredibly curious now.

Nedzu smiled sharply "there are several entrances to the vents from certain spots in the school, several in random hallways, one in my office and one in here" Izuku got up and started looking around, obviously Nedzu wasn't going to show them where the entrance in this room was, that would defeat the purpose of them being hidden, so they looked for any sign of an opening. It would have to be at ground level for ease of access, and there would have to be screws or hinges, but they couldn't find anything like that, so maybe it was a sliding

mechanism, in which case there should be a seam in the wall and some evidence of movement. It took them a little while, but eventually they found it, hidden away in a corner, coincidentally it just so happened to be the same corner that their desk was placed at, or, given the way Nedzu was grinning, perhaps it wasn't a coincidence at all.

"So if I open this it will give access to the vent system" Izuku poked at the panel a bit, trying to figure out how to open it, when Nedzu stopped them.

"Nothing will happen like that, it's fingerprint activated" he placed his paw on a specific spot in the wall next to the panel and suddenly the panel slid open revealing a hole just large enough for a grown adult to crawl through. Izuku stared at it in awe as Nedzu walked into the hole and disappeared, the panel didn't close however, did he want them to follow him? They looked around, Ishiyama was still the only person in the room, and he was very purposefully ignoring whatever Nedzu was doing, so they crawled into the vents, Nedzu then pressed a button on the wall of the vents and the panel closed behind them.

The tunnel wasn't as cramped as Izuku had initially imagined, they had some room to move and they could probably turn around if they wanted to, which made sense if these vents were constructed with the intention of using them like secret tunnels. Nedzu was a few paces ahead of them, and he was explaining the layout of the vent system, each entrance was carefully hidden, you could enter or exit through them, but also you could use any of the normal vent grates to drop into any room you liked. The fingerprint system was to prevent anyone from accidentally stumbling upon the entrances, and only two people currently had fingerprints registered, Nedzu and Aizawa, Izuku's would have to be added into the system and then they would have complete access to the vents, meaning they could travel anywhere they liked in the school without the notice of others. Izuku nodded along although they suspected they would quickly get lost if they were left to their own devices.

The two of them stopped by almost every class, checking in on how things were going, Izuku already knew that people tended to gossip when they thought they couldn't be heard but they were still stunned about how much information they had heard while passing by the hallways, mostly students gossiping about other students. Eventually they returned to the teacher's lounge, sitting in the vent in the ceiling, looking through the grate they could see quite a few of the teachers had returned, including their guardians, an idea formed in their head.

They quietly opened the grate and made sure that they weren't going to land on anybody and then, they dropped. Quite a few people were startled by their sudden appearance, the only ones who were unaffected were Aizawa, Kan and Inui, all of whom probably heard them opening the grate, Kurose practically jumped out of their skin and Izuku definitely heard some, *colourful* commentary from Kayama and Majima.

"Oh great, Nedzu showed the child how to use the vents, I'm sure that won't cause any issues at all" Kurose's voice was practically dripping with sarcasm.

Aizawa grinned at them while Yamada seemed entirely unperturbed by the situation, they supposed he was used enough to Aizawa's antics by now that he wasn't affected, Nedzu was speaking with Majima, presumably about getting Izuku's fingerprints added to the system and Kayama muttered something that sounded suspiciously like *"oh god, there's another one"*. It seemed that the vents were a useful tool indeed, not only did it allow them to eavesdrop on random conversations, it also meant that they could surprise people by literally dropping in on them, Izuku quietly returned to their desk and went right back to studying, entirely ignoring the mild panic they'd caused, although, instead of studying, they started trying to mentally trace the path they'd taken, making a half-formed mental diagram of the vents, imagine the chaos they could cause, Izuku grinned, this was gonna be *fun*.

Chapter End Notes

vent gremlin, vent gremlin, vent gremlin

Chapter 25: Happy Birthday Izuku!!!

Chapter Summary

> Izuku's birthday is in two days, so here's a birthday chapter for our favourite broccoli.

Chapter Notes

> --- : POV switch
> Signed Dialogue
> **Signed and Spoken Dialogue**

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hizashi hummed to himself as he hung up green streamers around the living room, today was a very special day, it was Izuku's tenth birthday! Of course that meant that there was going to be a party, not a big one though, there wasn't really anyone that Izuku had wanted to invite, just himself, Shouta, Nemuri and the Iida brothers. Everyone was bringing a present, and Nemuri was in charge of bringing the cake. Hizashi was decorating, Shouta and Izuku were supposed to be helping, but they had gotten distracted when the cats tried to attack the balloons they were putting up.

It was actually a complete accident that they found out when Izuku's birthday was, looking back, he and Shouta should probably have asked a while ago, but it was actually Tenya who asked the question. About a week ago, when everyone was hanging out at the apartment, the two had been talking about some show Tenya liked when he mentioned that he had gotten a poster of the main character for his birthday last year, then, in his usual blunt fashion asked Izuku what they had planned for *their* birthday this year. Izuku had been surprised for a while, before answering that they had in fact, no plans for their birthday, and that they hadn't celebrated their birthday in a long time. They didn't tell Tenya exactly why, but Hizashi and Shouta could guess the various reasons, between having nobody to celebrate with and the general lack of self-worth they had while they were living on their own. That had then prompted Tenya to ask when Izuku's birthday was, it was July fifteenth. That exchange had launched into everyone planning the party. Hizashi and Nemuri were particularly enthusiastic, although they toned it down after Izuku said that they didn't want anything too extravagant, a small celebration was enough for them.

Hizashi looked around at the now fully decorated living room, all the decorations were in green of course, there were streamers hung up on the walls and balloons scattered around. There wasn't much else, and in Hizashi's opinion it looked a bit lacking, but Izuku had been rather insistent on the matter when they had gone to pick out decorations. The table was set with paper plates and plastic cups, there was a bowl of candy and some bottles of juice as well, everything you needed for a kid's party. He had left his present on the table, it didn't really matter if Izuku saw it early, but Shouta had hidden his present in their bedroom, making sure there was no chance of anyone finding out what it was before he gave it to Izuku. Hizashi smiled, Shouta had been fussing over the present for a while, even though he already knew what he wanted to give them, he had been worried that they wouldn't like it, no matter how many times Hizashi assured him that Izuku would love it.

There was a knock on the door and Izuku practically ran to the door to open it, almost tripping over Mop in the process, it was Tenya and Tensei, Tenya had a small card in his hand and Tensei was carrying what seemed to be two books of some kind.

"Happy birthday Izuku!" Tenya greeted them enthusiastically. Izuku grinned and pulled him inside, then the two of them drifted off into an excited conversation.

Tensei chuckled and walked over to Hizashi, setting the books on the table, "you know, Tenya spent hours last night making sure he memorized the sign for birthday". That sounded about right, Tenya had made great progress in learning JSL, and he could understand enough to carry out a conversation with Izuku, although that did mean that about half of the signs he knew focused on quirks and the related scientific terminology.

There was another knock on the door, and since Izuku was preoccupied, Hizashi went to open the door, Nemuri stood outside balancing a box, presumably with the cake inside, in one hand while she knocked with the other. "Hello, I hope I'm not too late, I had to take a little detour to grab this" she said lifting a very small box, like the kind you put jewellery in.

"Nope, you're right on time." Hizashi took the cake box from her and set it on the table, she wished Izuku a happy birthday and brought both children over so that they could start the celebrations.

Izuku stared at the cake in front of them, it was a vanilla cake covered

in green icing with images of various heroes decorating the sides, the top of the cake had a nice border with the words “Happy Birthday Izuku” piped on top in neat handwriting, and a candle in the shape of a number ten was lit. It was so much more than they had ever expected, despite what Yamada said everything about this party felt grander than anything Izuku had ever seen.

“Go on, blow out the candle, make a wish!” Kayama encouraged them. Izuku closed their eyes, what did they want to wish for? They wracked their brain trying to think of something, but what did they want that they didn’t already have? They had a home, they had mentors who cared about them, they were studying their passion, they were training to be a hero! They had everything they had dreamed of since they were little, what more did they even wish for? Then, an idea popped into their mind, that was the perfect wish. Izuku blew out the candle, as they did they heard Kayama start singing happy birthday, and one by one everyone else joined in, and they knew in their heart and soul, they had made the right wish.

Yamada handed them a knife to cut the cake with, and they carefully cut slices for everybody, although, they probably didn’t have to be so precise, with the small number of people there would be more than enough cake leftover for people to grab seconds. The entire group slowly struck off into individual conversations, Izuku returned to talking with Tenya.

“What did you wish for anyways?” Tenya asked, Izuku thought about telling him before shaking their head.

“If I tell you it won’t come true.”

“That doesn’t make any sense, if anything its more likely to come true if you tell someone” Tenya reasoned, ever the rational thinker.

“Well, this wish is different, it’s important, so I have to keep it a secret” Izuku wasn’t quite sure what the consequences of telling their wish to someone would be, but any response they could think of wasn’t all that good.

Tenya mumbled something about that not being rational but was cut short when Yamada loudly called everyone over so that they could give Izuku their presents, Tenya brightened up at that and practically dragged Izuku over to where the adults were sitting.

Izuku was a little startled when Tenya suddenly handed them a card, it was a rather nice looking light blue card, it said Happy Birthday in

Tenya's neat handwriting, and there were some balloons and a generic birthday cake doodled on the front, the inside had a small note about how great of a friend Izuku was and that Tenya was honoured to be considered their friend. They smiled and thanked him, to which he beamed "I made that myself, I didn't even have to get my brother to help me!" He seemed really proud of that accomplishment.

Tenya's brother handed them two books, one was a mystery novel that Izuku had shown an interest for in the past, and the other was a book on the history of quirks. "The novel is from me, the history book was Tenya's idea" he explained. Izuku took both with shining eyes, as much as they wanted to start reading the books right here they still had two more gifts left, they set the books down on the table.

Kayama gave them a little purple jewellery box, inside was a silver locket, "it's empty right now, so you can put whatever you like in there" she said excitedly. Izuku turned it over in their hands, it was really pretty, the outside of the locket had an elegant pattern of stars engraved onto it, they had no idea on what to put in it right now, but they could always figure that out later.

Yamada gave them a really nice looking notebook, the kind they could fit in their pocket, it had a black cover and a small pocket where they could keep a pen "so that it's easier for you to take notes on the fly" Izuku smiled, this was going to be used quite a lot.

Everyone wished them a happy birthday once again, and after some more small talk, Kayama and the Iidas left, at which point Aizawa tapped their shoulder. "Well, now that they're gone, you have one last present" Izuku looked confused which made Aizawa smile in amusement "you didn't forget about my gift, did you?" Izuku hadn't thought Aizawa had gotten them a gift, they hadn't seen any hint of another gift laying around, had he been keeping it hidden somewhere? Aizawa left the room to fetch it and when he got back he was holding long metal bo staff. Izuku's eyes widened, did this mean what they thought it meant? Aizawa must have seen their shocked expression because he grinned and nodded his head "I figured I've kept you benched long enough" he handed the staff to Izuku, it wasn't too heavy, probably made for speed rather than damage, they made sure they wouldn't hit anything and experimentally swung it, it would take some time to get used to, but they could definitely work with it. Izuku put the staff down and hugged Aizawa who seemed surprised but returned the hug.

Yamada chuckled "I told you they would love it."

By the time the living room was cleaned up it was starting to get dark, so Izuku took their gifts and returned to their room. They carefully put away their gifts, the books all went on their shelf along with Tenya's card, the locket and it's box sat on their nightstand and the bo staff was put in the closet next to the rest of their vigilante gear.

Izuku looked out of their window at the last of the setting sun and smiled, they were feeling over the moon, maybe it was because this was their first birthday in five years, maybe it was because of the people around them, but this day felt truly special. They had so many things they couldn't wait to do, so many things that they worked towards, and today, they were one year older, and one year closer to their goals, but for now they would sleep, hopefully not have any nightmares, and wake up tomorrow for another day spent with the people who made them feel safe.

I wish that I will always have a family like this.

Chapter End Notes

The green bean is officially in the double digits!!

Chapter 26: Connecting the Dots

Chapter Summary

Wraith kicks some ass and causes confusion.
Someone makes some connections.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku dodged a punch as they tried to keep a distance from the lady in front of them, her porcupine quirk was a real problem since their staff kept getting caught in the quills that made up her hair. They had to wait for an opening, and soon enough the opportunity presented itself. She got distracted by one of her friends getting thrown into a light pole by Eraser's capture weapon. Izuku made two quick strikes, one to her legs, causing her to fall, and one to the chin, knocking her out. They sighed and looked over the situation, several unconscious or tied up people were scattered around them, two rival gangs had started a fight in the middle of the street, about three people on each team, Eraser had noticed it first and since de-escalation hadn't worked, Izuku joined in the ensuing fight. Luckily no sane person would be wandering the streets past midnight so there were no civilians at risk. It wasn't a particularly tough fight since, while they were fighting six people, those people were also fighting each other, that didn't mean that they got out of it unharmed of course, Izuku definitely had a bruise or two from getting literally thrown into a pile of trash by someone with a strength quirk and Eraser had a cut on his hand from a lucky hit from someone's knife.

Izuku hopped up to the rooftop and, after making sure the police were called and telling them what happened, Eraser soon joined them and the pair set off down their usual patrol route. Izuku had to adjust their pace a few times, the extra weight of the new staff strapped to their back was taking quite some time to get used to, a month still hadn't been enough, even their old sign pole had been hollow and therefore it was much lighter and far easier to run around with. It was nice to be back to properly being a vigilante, and not just Eraser's shadow, although there was the one problem of Yamada constantly fretting over them now that they were getting involved in the fights, and they were sure they were going to be fussed at for the bruises they'd

managed to get today, on the bright side it was always funny to see Yamada worry over Aizawa, who always looked like a disgruntled cat whenever he couldn't escape Yamada's notice.

A scream rang through the air and immediately they were sprinting in that direction, Eraser running right alongside them. They quickly reached the alleyway that the scream emanated from and Izuku looked over the situation in the split second it took to jump down and get themself involved, a young woman with bruises and cuts all over her face and arms was cowering away from a man who was yelling at her, something about her being ungrateful, but he was quickly cut off by Izuku landing on top of him and knocking him out with their staff. The woman still looked terrified flinching away as they got closer, they held out their hand to help her up, she took it cautiously. Eraser had jumped down next to them and was calling the police, he asked the woman some questions, apparently that was her ex-boyfriend and he had been stalking her for some time after their breakup, she had confronted him, and he got violent. They stayed until the police showed up to arrest the man and take the woman in for questioning and to get her to a hospital, at which point they left to finish patrolling.

Shouta smiled to himself as Wraith hid in the shadows of the alleyway, they had just stopped a mugging and were waiting for the police officer that arrived to arrest the criminal, at some point the officer worked up the courage to ask about the vigilante.

"Uh, who is that behind you?"

Shouta internally cackled as he heard the faint footsteps of Wraith slipping into the shadows "there's no one there" he said, completely deadpan.

The officer pointed at the alleyway "yes there is they're…" the officer blinked a few times, realising that Wraith was no-longer in sight, "I could have sworn there was…"

"You're probably seeing things, there's no-one else in this alleyway" Shouta only felt a little guilt for making the poor officer question their sanity, but it was far outweighed by the sheer joy he felt seeing them look around frantically as if searching for a ghost.

The second the officer left, completely bewildered and muttering something about needing more sleep, Wraith stepped out of the shadows Shouta could swear that they were grinning under their

mask, they always had fun messing with whatever poor sap arrived on the scene, the only person they couldn't pull tricks on was Tsukauchi, on account of his quirk triggering whenever Shouta tried to play dumb about Wraith's antics. Then again, it was likely only a matter of time until Wraith found a way to bypass it, until then however, they settled for making him question his career choices by being as annoying as they possibly could be, Shouta was fairly sure the detective's face fell every time he saw them at a crime scene.

It was almost three in the morning by the time they got back home, Hizashi was probably asleep by now, Shouta smiled, at least he would be able to bandage the cut on his hand without that overgrown cockatoo looking over his shoulder and lecturing him about getting hurt. Izuku had immediately gone to bed, good, they had analysis lessons tomorrow and being tired during that would spell disaster for everyone.

Izuku layed on their bed, Shadow curled up beside them, today had been eventful, they supposed they should get some sleep. They couldn't wait for their lesson tomorrow, it wasn't that they didn't enjoy learning their normal school subjects, but analysis was just so fun, and Nedzu was an amazing teacher, there was so much he'd taught them about that they'd never even considered adding into their analyses, it all seemed kind of obvious in hindsight.

Of course they got plenty of opportunities to put what they learnt into practice, not only because Nedzu allowed them to analyse various students, mostly the third years, but it also helped them greatly on their patrols, being able to identify their opponents' quirks quicker than ever, meaning they spent less time assessing situations before they interjected. Of course Nedzu didn't know about that second reason, but they still figured it was only a matter of time, especially now that they were fighting criminals and no longer staying hidden.

Izuku closed their eyes, they'd probably get a few hours of sleep, not that much less than what they usually got, their nightmares as persistent as ever, but tomorrow would be a great day, even if they had a small, nagging feeling in the back of their mind that something was going to go sideways.

A small pile of police reports sat on the desk in the principal's office, some dated as far back as three years ago, all dealing with a curious vigilante. Nedzu never normally paid attention to these things, best to let the police department deal with vigilantes however they saw fit,

but he'd recently had a talk with Tsukauchi, not anything particular, just business, but he had mentioned a particular thorn in his side, a vigilante by the name of Wraith. According to Tsukauchi, the vigilante had recently taken to following Eraserhead around, again, not really something Nedzu would look into, if the vigilante's description hadn't rung several bells, namely, the red shoes, the same red shoes that Izuku had informed him were worn by quirkless people. Now, what would it mean that a quirkless vigilante starts following Eraserhead around a month and a half after Aizawa takes a quirkless child under his care. And digging further into the case he found out that the hero originally put on the Wraith case was Eraserhead himself, things were clicking into place. Nedzu had thought that they were far more familiar with each other than should have been for only having met the day that Aizawa saved Izuku's life, it made far more sense that they'd known each other since he was put on Wraith's trail.

Now, the question was, what to do with this information? As a hero? He should tell Tsukauchi, let the police, and Aizawa, deal with whatever the fallout is. But, as Izuku's mentor? He couldn't bring himself to tell anybody, not if it meant losing his protégé. Of course, he would have a stern talk with Izuku tomorrow, or at least, try to understand the reason they chose this path at such a young age. And as for who else would find out, that would have to be discussed with Izuku themself.

Tomorrow was going to be a very interesting lesson indeed.

Chapter End Notes

uh oh.

Chapter 27: The vigilante is out of the bag.

Chapter Summary

Nedzu confronts Izuku. Izuku panics. The secret is out.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku practically bounced around as they walked into UA, as usual the hallways were empty, save for the few staff who were headed towards their designated areas, Izuku on the other hand had a different route, they split away from Yamada and Aizawa and found the secret panel located nearby the front doors. Nedzu had added their fingerprints to the vent system's database, meaning they had full access to the secret passages that made up the vents, they didn't *have* to use them to get around, but it was fun, and they would be lying if they said it didn't amuse them to pop out of the ceiling and surprise the unsuspecting staff. They made their way to the principal's office for their analysis lesson, pausing to greet Tanaka as they passed over the cafeteria and took a small detour to say hi to Shuzenji in the infirmary, they would have gone to the teacher's lounge to say hello to everyone there, but it was an inconvenient detour and they didn't want to be late. Soon enough they reached the principal's office and dropped in near Nedzu, he appeared to be organizing some papers. Izuku paid it no mind however since he always had paperwork to deal with, one of the side effects of running a school, so they sat down in their chair with only a small glance at the papers, they looked like police reports, perhaps it was about some operation or raid that Nedzu was helping strategize.

"Good morning Nedzu-sensei!" Izuku said, taking their notebook out of their bag, it was a new one, their tenth actually, their ninth was mostly full of entries on the students, it was the same plain black cover as their last two, it made it a lot easier to keep track of which notes were analysis and which notes were for normal subjects, since those notebooks were always colourful and usually hero themed.

"Good morning Izuku" Nedzu greeted them, putting the papers back in his desk, again, Izuku tried to catch a sneaky glance at the papers' contents but Nedzu kept them face down the entire time, the only

thing they could see is that one of the reports was dated for last night, that was odd, maybe it was important? Surely he would say something if it was truly important, or at least, he never cared if they happened to catch a glimpse of whatever he was working on, however, Izuku was definitely curious. What could possibly be so important that Nedzu was actively hiding it from them?

Their analysis lesson started out rather simple, a short test on the different types of quirks and their technical classifications, it seemed a bit too easy for what Nedzu normally gave them, but perhaps it was their imagination, Izuku completed the test quickly. They moved on to talking about the situational effectiveness of different quirks, including discussions on how quirks that relied on external factors, namely kinesis quirks, transmutation quirks, and any quirk that required a situational trigger, were easily taken down by simply depriving them of the necessary material or circumstance, on the other hand, given how almost anything can be found anywhere it was much harder to expect where the user would get their ammunition from, for example someone with a hydrokinesis quirk fighting in the snow could use the water that forms from the snow melting around their feet. Meanwhile quirks that relied on internal functions like mental quirks, most mutation quirks or quirks that relied on the user's body, were far more reliable since, unless you were willing to cause permanent physical or mental damage to the person, it was a lot trickier to nullify, but reliable also meant predictable, a touch based quirk simply requires you to stay out of reach of your opponent in order to avoid being affected. Then the discussion took a disconcertingly familiar turn as they started to discuss the most effective way to take down a series of quirks that sounded identical to some of the quirks that the criminals they had fought last night during patrol had, at first it was easy to brush off, a strength quirk was common enough, a transformation quirk with specific details, okay, maybe Nedzu was just pulling from random police files, and then it kept happening, and they were starting to get suspicious.

"What would be the best way of taking down someone with a mutation quirk, specifically that of a porcupine?" Nedzu's eyes gleamed sharply, and Izuku resisted the urge to hide under the chair, if Nedzu knew about Wraith, they were in big trouble, Izuku started scanning the area for escape routes.

"I suppose it would be to deal with them at long range, perhaps a gun, or a non-contact quirk" they tried to play it cool, desperately hoping this was all a coincidence.

“What if all you had was a melee weapon?”

Izuku did *not* like where this was going, “what kind of melee weapon exactly? I’m sure a knife wouldn’t be of much use” they could feel the smile on their face grow strained, although they hoped Nedzu hadn’t picked up on it.

“A bo staff.”

Oh shit, oh shit, oh no, Nedzu knew, he knew everything, Izuku’s mind went into overdrive, they forced a smile and tried to answer the question as if they had no idea what Nedzu was hinting at “a bo staff? Well, I think that would be a pretty inconvenient weapon to fight this quirk with, its long and relatively thin, it would probably get stuck in the person’s quills, but I suppose if you could catch them off guard you could find an area without quills to hit.” The vents were the closest option, but the panels could be controlled remotely from Nedzu’s computer, Izuku wouldn’t be surprised if he had already locked them, the next option was the door, but it was the middle of the day and close to lunch time, running out in the middle of the hallway like that would draw attention.

Nedzu nodded “that would work, although I imagine it would be quite difficult to accomplish without a teammate.” They would have to take the risk, but where would they run to? The teachers’ lounge maybe, either Aizawa or Yamada would be in there at this time, but what if the other teachers had been told? As skilled as their guardians were they didn’t think they could distract eight fully trained pro heroes. The better option would be to make a break for it and hide somewhere on school grounds.

Izuku tried to divert the direction of the conversation away from a retelling of last night’s events “maybe, but assuming that you were alone it would still be your best bet given the circumstances you have laid out for me.” Nedzu had cameras everywhere there was no way they wouldn’t be found if they tried to hide here, but the school gates were also operated by an electronic system, it wouldn’t open without an ID and they didn’t have one, there was no need since Aizawa and Yamada always accompanied them into and out of the school.

“Well, that doesn’t matter, you weren’t alone” Izuku froze, there was no way to avoid the inevitable, they would probably be turned over to the police custody, Aizawa and Yamada, they’d probably get in trouble as well, they did know who they were and never reported it. This was the end of their dream, wasn’t it?

“I don’t understand, this is a hypothetical, why are you addressing me directly?” maybe if they played dumb enough.

“We both know why Izuku, or should I call you Wraith?”

Izuku sighed “what are you going to do?”

“Nothing.”

Izuku had to pause and process that response “nothing?”

“Nothing” Nedzu confirmed “I would hate to lose my star pupil to such, trivial concerns.”

Izuku didn’t know what just happened, but they were thanking every higher power out there that Nedzu had such an *unconventional* sense of morals.

“Of course the question of who else to tell, well, I’m certain my staff would find out sooner or later, however, when that happens is up to you, but it would be better to do it soon” Izuku nodded, that was, understandable. When would be a good time, maybe it would be better to rip the band aid off.

“Now, we tell them now.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes”

Shouta wasn’t expecting anything to go wrong today, nothing unexpected at all, just a normal day of teaching. And so far, that was what had happened, it was getting close to the end of the school day, everyone was once again gathered in the teachers’ lounge, chattering away, while Shouta was just waiting for the day to end so that he could go home and chill out with the cats, Hizashi and Izuku. When suddenly, *the god damn rat* drops in, followed shortly by Izuku.

“I believe we require everyone’s attention, there is something Izuku would like to say.” What? Shouta glanced at Izuku, who looked incredibly sheepish, what was Nedzu talking about? “I believe some of you are familiar with a vigilante called Wraith?” Oh, *oh hell no*. Shouta tensed, and he saw Hisashi sit up straight next to him, Nedzu knew, he knew and Izuku was going to tell everyone here, they made eye contact, Shouta looked concerned, if Nedzu was forcing them say this, forget the fact that he was in a room full of pro heroes, Shouta

was going to walk over there and *strangle that stupid rat until his eyes fell out*. Izuku gave him a smile, a reassurance that they were doing this willingly, still, he kept an eye on Nedzu, just in case.

“What’s so important about a random vigilante?” Majima asked, not looking up from xyr work.

“Because” Izuku began, pausing as they decided how to word this “because I am them”

And the uproar that erupted in the room could have rivalled one of Hizashi’s yells, a cacophony of questions and exclamations that only ceased when Kan hit it’s desk with such force that Shouta was surprised that the desk didn’t break, it looked like it couldn’t decide whether to be impressed or angry. Oh right, as an underground hero stationed in Musutafu, Kan would have been part of the group that was keeping an eye out for Wraith before Shouta was personally put on the task of hunting them down.

“You’re saying, that the vigilante who has been running circles around *all* the undergrounders of Musutafu, for *three years*” Kan said through gritted teeth “has been, a. God. Damn. ***Child***.”

“Uhh, yes?” Izuku shifted uncomfortably.

Kan shook it’s head “I-“ it sighed “damn kid, you sure are something”

“Thank you?”

Shouta relaxed as he saw everyone else slowly start talking a lot less chaotically, apparently having had time to process the information, Izuku was asked a few questions, although, nothing too personal, mostly just random things.

“Hey Izuku?” Kurose asked “where’d you learn how to fight?”

“Well, you see, I didn’t, not for a while”

“Really? But, you can fight now?”

“Yeah, Aizawa taught me, he also didn’t let me fight anyone until I learned” they looked a little miffed at that.

Shouta spoke up “well I’m not going to let some kid fight criminals when they can’t even throw a punch.”

Somehow, nothing went wrong, some of the others had reservations

about letting a child put themself in danger like that, but it only took Izuku arguing with them for a solid ten minutes before they realised that they were going to fight crime no matter what, and the only real difference was whether Shouta was able to keep an eye on them or not. Nemuri was a bit miffed that they hadn't told her before, but laughed it off, saying she understood why.

By the time they left for home Izuku could feel themself tearing up from all the kindness they were getting. They had been nervous, but, after the initial outcry, everything had been fine, everything was going to be fine.

Chapter End Notes

Well that went better than expected.

Chapter 28: Realisations and Decisions

Chapter Summary

> After a day out with their guardians, Izuku makes an important realisation, and one major decision.

Chapter Notes

> --- : POV switch
> Signed Dialogue
> **Signed and Spoken Dialogue**

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku was practically bouncing around their room as they got ready for the day, the weekend was always fun, since they just got to hang out with their guardians all day, whether that was going outside or just staying at home and watching a movie, sometimes Tenya and his brother would visit, or maybe Kayama. Today though, was just going to be them, Aizawa and Yamada, and these days always felt, actually, Izuku could never quite put their finger on the feeling they felt, but if they had to describe it, they would say that it was cozy.

They rooted through their closet and decided on wearing one of their joke shirts, they had to dig it out from next to their Wraith costume, they really needed to put that thing in its own box, now that it had more parts to it that took up way too much space in their small closet. The extra stuff was some padded armour that they wore underneath their hoodie and jeans, courtesy of Majima, who had insisted that if Izuku was going to go around beating up criminals, that they at least have some armour to protect them, it wasn't impenetrable by any means, but it allowed them to take a few more hits than they normally would, and it wasn't bulky, so they still had their full range of movement. Izuku was honestly surprised at how little changed after they told everyone about their vigilantism, the only real thing that changed was that everyone asked them about their patrols whenever they got the chance. They knew from sneaking around the vents that some of the teachers, namely Kayama, Katou, Inui and Ishiyama had started secretly collecting any and all articles about Wraith that they could find and were putting them in a "secret file", although Izuku thought that their file looked suspiciously like a scrapbook.

They scooped Shadow off their bed and wandered into the kitchen, cat

in hand, they were immediately greeted with the mouthwatering smell of katsudon, Yamada must have gotten up early and made breakfast. Izuku loved katsudon, they remembered Inko frequently making it for them when they were little, and even though those memories were rather bitter and a bit hazy to them now, it was still their favourite dish. The vague memories of the taste were always rather odd, before, they would have said that Inko made the best katsudon in the world, but now? They couldn't say the same, maybe it was because their opinion of her had soured so much over the last half a year, but Izuku honestly couldn't imagine her katsudon being even half as good as the one Yamada made. They set Shadow on the counter and grabbed a cup of coffee from the machine, earning them a defeated sigh from Yamada as he gave an annoyed glare towards where Aizawa was drinking his own coffee and smiling at the scene before him.

The three of them talked about what they wanted to do today while they ate breakfast, several ideas were thrown around, but in the end, they decided on going to the park. Izuku hurried back to their room after breakfast, they quickly grabbed their pocket notebook and then waited impatiently for the extra few minutes it took for their guardians to get ready. Aizawa had to remind them several times to slow down as they made their way down the building's staircase, although Izuku knew they wouldn't trip. And they were practically vibrating in their seat on the drive to the park, amusing Yamada to no end because, even though they'd gone to this park several times by now, they always had the same reaction, over-excited impatience.

When they got to the park Izuku barely waited until the car had stopped before getting down followed shortly by Yamada and Aizawa, the three of them set off to what had quickly become Izuku's favourite spot in the park, it was near one of the big trees that dotted the park, but it was in the far corner of the park, so they usually weren't disturbed by any other people. And on the rare occasion someone wandered by, Izuku and Aizawa usually just slipped behind the tree, wanting to avoid any unnecessary social interaction, and a combination of their stealth skills and the relatively large shadow cast by the tree made it almost impossible to spot them unless they wanted to be spotted. Today however was a calm day, Izuku could see several people in the middle of the park, families having picnics, a few couples going on dates, groups of friends hanging out, kids playing with sticks, it seemed that everyone was taking advantage of the nice weather to have some fun.

After some time the discussion briefly turned to their studies and Izuku excitedly talked about all the progress they'd made, in fact, they

were already learning material taught in the first year of middle school, and even more excitedly they talked about the latest quirks they'd analysed, Yamada matched their enthusiasm, interjecting with jokes and gossip, while Aizawa settled for headpats and half hidden smiles to show that he was listening.

It was just Shouta and Izuku at the moment, Hizashi had run off to get lunch for all of them, although, he was taking a long time. He smiled as Izuku wandered around the area, looking at whatever odd things caught their eye, usually a bug, or a cool rock. They always showed him whatever they found, it was adorable really, and he did try to be interested, even if he couldn't really match Hizashi's enthusiasm, but he got the feeling that they understood what he was trying to do anyway. It was times like these when it was so obvious that Izuku was still just a child, Shouta had honestly worried a bit when he and Hizashi had first taken them in, after all, spending five years of your childhood fending for yourself and two of those years being a vigilante, in addition to all the discrimination, well, that could certainly mess someone up. And at first, Izuku had acted far too mature for their age, and in some ways they still did, but it was nice to know that underneath all the skills and genius, they were still capable of being a kid. Shouta suspected it had something to do with the fact that they were finally getting some therapy.

When Hizashi returned, lunch in one hand, and a box of cookies in the other, so that's what took him so long, he must have run to the bakery all the way down the street, Shouta shook his head fondly, no doubt this was entirely on impulse or he would have told them where he was going before he left. They all sat down under the tree, ate lunch, and then had a peaceful conversation while munching cookies, for approximately two minutes. Suddenly, Hizashi snatched a cookie right out of Shouta's hand, of course, he tried to get it back, but to no avail, Hizashi held the cookie triumphantly, that was, until Izuku snuck up on Hizashi and stole the cookie for themself, taking a bite out of it so that nobody could steal it back. In the end however, the actual cookie was forgotten in favour of a game of tag, it was honestly a bit unfair, after all two of them had a major advantage, then again, Hizashi didn't seem to mind being "it" for most of the time, Shouta didn't really mind that either, since it kept the game relatively sane. When he or Izuku was "it" things got a little crazy, after all, the two of them parkoured across the city almost every night, so climbing the tree to escape each other was child's play. He did panic a bit when, at some point, Izuku fell from one of the lower branches, but they only got a scratch on their hand, luckily Shouta always carried plasters with him,

that wasn't even a habit that had formed because of Izuku, no, he started carrying them shortly after he started dating Hizashi, who used to be, and still sometimes was, a major klutz.

By the time they left the park, the sun was starting to set, and it was almost completely dark by the time they got to the apartment, Izuku was rather tired, and they ended up flopping onto the couch the second they got the chance, soon joined by the cats, they heard a soft laugh and the clicking of a photo being taken, no doubt by Yamada. They smiled to themself as they half listened to whatever conversation their guardians were having, and they were flooded once again with that cozy feeling, but cozy wasn't enough to describe the feeling, no, it was every good thing in the world wrapped into one, the feeling of a warm blanket on a cold night, or the sound of laughter and energy. They vaguely remembered feeling this feeling before, but, it must have been so long ago that they'd forgotten why.

They frowned, it had been bothering them for quite some time now, the mystery of this feeling. They had been trying to puzzle it out, but, if only they could remember why they'd felt it before, they dug through their hazy memories of their early life, every time they remembered that feeling, it was in a memory of one of their biological parents, or their home, but, they couldn't ever remember the feeling being as strong as it was now, or perhaps that was due to the fact that they were so young back then, that they could no longer recall how strongly they'd felt it, or maybe it felt stronger now because they hadn't felt it in a long time. Still, Izuku was confused, if they had associated this feeling with their parents, at least, before they were abandoned, then logically this feeling would have something to do with family, so why would they be feeling it now? Then it hit them, it was because this *was* their family now, they'd spent so long without one, that they hadn't even realised how quickly they'd gained one, looking back, they could practically pinpoint the exact moment they'd started considering Aizawa and Yamada as family. It was shortly after they'd started mentoring them, even before Izuku had started living with them. They'd looked up to them, as a source of encouragement and comfort, just like they used to with their old parents. Did that mean they thought of the two as their parents? Izuku hesitated on that, for one, they had no idea what that would mean for them, for another, these realisations had happened in the span of a few minutes, and they weren't entirely ready to grapple with the mental spiral they'd likely go down if they accepted these new understandings as fact. But, no, they couldn't deny it, the issue was, what would they do with this new information? They supposed they could think over it

more, yes, that is what they'd do.

Hizashi had just finished cleaning up the plates from dinner when it happened, Shouta and Izuku were seated on the couch, simply relaxing with the cats, and Hizashi joined them soon afterwards, they were having a discussion about some case or another, he wasn't really paying attention, Shouta had been complaining about Izuku being reckless, and Izuku indignantly responded. "Actually I knew exactly what I was doing".

"That may be, but it was still reckless, if I wasn't there to get you out of that fight who knows what could have happened" Shouta sounded entirely too exasperated, but Hizashi could hear the underlying worry in his tone.

"Sorry dad, I won't…" Izuku froze, and it took Hizashi's tired brain a few seconds to process why.

"Did you just call me dad?" Shouta sounded shocked, honestly so was Hizashi, yeah, they had both considered Izuku as their kid ever since they took them in, but they never really acknowledged it to anyone but themselves, after all, they didn't really want to overstep any boundaries.

Izuku quickly apologized, even though they really didn't need to "it was an accident, I just, um, well, I was thinking earlier, and I guess it was on my mind, but, you two are basically parents to me, I just, didn't realise it until earlier today, I- sorry, that's awkward isn't it." To say Hizashi was overjoyed was an understatement, and he could see Shouta smiling as well, Izuku looked so ambarrased however.

"Don't worry about it little listener, we don't mind" Hizashi was quick to reassure them.

"You don't?"

"Yeah, I mean, we both think of you as our kid anyways, so it's really not an issue" Izuku looked stunned at that, and looked at Shouta for confirmation, he just nodded.

Hizashi could see Izuku's eyes start to water, he internally prepared himself for the waterworks that would inevitably follow, the kid had a rather endearing habit of expressing almost every strong emotion through tears. Inevitably the three of them ended up in a cuddle pile on the couch.

They were all quiet for some time, Hizashi knew what he wanted to ask, **“hey Izuku?”**

“Yeah papa?” Izuku asked, and Hizashi had to blink away some tears himself.

“Do you want to be our kid, like, officially?”

“You mean?” Izuku’s eyes lit up as they realised what Hizashi was asking.

“Yes, do you want us to adopt you?” Shouta asked, “you don’t have to give your answer now, you can think about it-“

“Yes, yes yes *yes*” Izuku interrupted him, and the tears were back in their eyes.

Hizashi smiled, it was going to take some time, what with all the procedures and paperwork, but they’d finally be able to call Izuku their kid, and looking at them, they were just as excited about the idea.

Chapter End Notes

> It may have taken us twenty eight chapters to get here, but its official!!!

Chapter 29: Home at Last

Chapter Summary

A few scenes over three days.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The last few weeks had been a whirlwind for Izuku, they didn't quite understand all the legal procedures that they had to go through for the adoption, it involved a bunch of paperwork and meetings with people that asked really personal questions. They were tired of the whole thing, but all the hassle was completely worth it just to call Aizawa and Yamada their fathers, they had taken both of their fathers' last names, since they hadn't changed their names when they got married. And after the final piece of paper was signed, they were officially Aizawa-Yamada Izuku, not that they would be using their new family name that often, since everyone they knew just called them Izuku.

Izuku must have fallen asleep somewhere during the drive home because they honestly didn't remember much of what happened after they left the office, just getting into the car and listening to their dads talk before they drifted off to the soft hum of the car's engine. They still couldn't believe that it was official, while they *had* been reffering to Aizawa and Yamada as their dad and papa for about a month now, which was how long the adoption process had been, but to have it be legalized and completely official, well, they could cry tears of joy just thinking about it.

Izuku was woken up by soft laughter, papa was smiling at them from the passenger seat, Izuku smiled back sleepily and uncurled from their spot in the backseat, they realised that the car had stopped moving, they looked out the window and realised that they'd reached the apartment. Izuku practically sprinted up the stairs and all the way to their door, bouncing in place while they waited for their parents to catch up, dad had just smiled and unlocked the door.

"Izuku?" Dad caught their attention as he opened the door.

"Yeah?"

“Welcome home kid.”

Izuku grinned as they were greeted by Mop and Shadow curling around their legs, this was their home now, it had been for some time, but now it felt, permanent, like it was here and it was never going away. They flopped on the couch, it was Saturday, so their parents didn’t have work tomorrow, they had a feeling it was going to be spent relaxing, hopefully, although things were never calm for long, and it was probably going to be particularly chaotic when they returned to UA on Monday, Izuku remembered Kayama bragging to the other staff last week about being an aunt soon, Izuku frowned, something about that didn’t sit quite right with them, but they brushed the thought aside instead choosing to focus on the warm feeling of finally having a family to call their own.

That morning, Hizashi woke up to a loud crash and a startled yowl in the living room, it was barely morning, even Shouta hadn’t woken up yet, the two of them rushed out of their room and turned on the living room light, expecting the worst, only to see Izuku, with a cut on their hand, holding a furious Mop and standing over what used to be a mug. Izuku looked up at them sheepishly, they set Mop down far away from the ceramic shards, she promptly hissed and ran off to the top of the bookshelf so that she could glare down at them disapprovingly.

“Couldn’t sleep, so I went to make coffee, and then I kinda, tripped over Mop” they explained, red with embarrassment, “I probably shouldn’t have tried to walk around in the dark with the cats wandering around.”

Hizashi sighed and started cleaning up the broken mug, at least there wasn’t any coffee in it, while Shouta grabbed the first aid kit to tend to the cut on Izuku’s hand, and since everyone was awake already and it was so close to morning that there was really no point in going back to bed, Hizashi got started on making breakfast. Only one day after they finished the adoption, only *one* day with Izuku officially being their child and there was already chaos, he wouldn’t have it any other way.

Izuku heard a knock on the door at around midday, they opened the door and was immediately tackled by a blur of movement, Izuku fell to the floor and got a face-full of blue hair, followed by guffawing and wheezing from the blur’s older brother, they were surprised, Tenya was not normally a touchy person, in fact they could count on one hand the number of times he’d initiated a hug with anyone. Izuku

pried him off themself and got to their feet.

“Good afternoon Tenya” Izuku said smiling at him, Tenya always gave greetings that were at least semi-formal, and even if they personally preferred to be casual, they always matched his style because it made Tenya’s eyes light up happily.

“Good afternoon cousin!” Tenya said with a small smile on his face.

“Cousin?” Izuku asked.

“Your fathers are my uncles, that makes us cousins” Izuku had to dodge out of the way of Tenya’s arm as he unconsciously chopped it through the air while he spoke.

“So your brother, would be, also my cousin?” Izuku frowned, no, that didn’t sound right, Ida Tensei was their fathers’ friend, it would be weird to call him their cousin “actually, I think I’m just going to call him my uncle.”

Tenya looked like he was doing a complicated maths problem in his mind, “but, he’s my brother, that would also make me…” Tenya shook his head “you know what, I’m not even going to try, following the logic seems to lead us to uncomfortable results no matter what we do.”

Izuku and Tenya stared at each other for a few seconds, before silently agreeing to never think about the weirdness of their new family tree ever again.

They ended up chatting for a short while before the brothers had to leave, apparently Tensei was in the area for hero work, and they had just stopped by to congratulate Izuku on being adopted.

Shouta could barely think with the loud chatter that encompassed the teachers’ lounge, it seemed that everyone had something to say to Izuku, positive things, but still, it was all a bit loud, Shouta hated it. It would be bearable if his insufferable (he hates to admit it) *friends*, wouldn’t try and talk to *him* about it. He basically crawled into his sleeping bag under his desk and stayed put, at least anyone who tried to bother him there usually got the hint thanks to his well practiced glare. Still, it looked like there was something bothering Izuku, they kept glancing over at Nemuri and frowning, she was bragging to everyone who would listen about officially being an aunt, Shouta didn’t know why his kid looked so distressed, but he hated it.

He shuffled out from under his desk and made eye contact with Izuku, just to gauge the situation, but they seemed deep in thought, and started writing something down, whatever was going through their head seemed to have turned into some kind of puzzle. It was a weird habit really, Izuku treated a lot of things in life like one of their analyses, people especially, but it somehow got results. Although when it came to people, Shouta was glad that they never told their thoughts to the people in question, because that would surely make some people angry, the kid needed some people skills, perhaps Nemuri and Hizashi could teach them, because it *definitely* wasn't going to be him.

Izuku looked at the notes scribbled in the corner of their book, they were supposed to be chemistry equations, but it was starting to look like psychology reports, they sighed as they heard more commotion, Kurose was desperately trying to get their wife to shut up, meanwhile Kayama just kept talking endlessly, it seemed that she was *really* excited to be an aunt.

Izuku frowned again, Kayama's bragging was getting under their skin, something kept bothering them, and they had no idea why on earth nobody else was saying anything. They knew that Kayama visited them sometimes, but other than that, she didn't really do more than the rest of the staff, what gave her and her alone extended family status? No, they figured that all of the staff, save for dad and papa, were the same status in their mind, now to figure out what exactly that status was. Yeah, they felt a close connection to them, but was it close enough for Izuku to consider them family, or maybe it wasn't and they were overthinking things, but they really didn't know. On the other hand, everyone had been so nice to them, and they had been super supportive of their dreams and even offered to help, and they were all really protective of them, or maybe that's just because they're a child.

Izuku sighed and put their head in their hands, they had just gotten over one crisis of family, they *really* didn't need another one.

Chapter End Notes

> Aaand the green bean has even more of a headache than last time, oops.
>
> I haven't done this in a while, but, *memes*:
> Tenya, trying to figure out how exactly he and Izuku are related.

Nemuri: *being kind of annoying*
Anan, tired of their wife's nonsense: Babe, please, we get it, you don't have to repeat it for the millionth time.

Chapter 30: An Experiment and its Results

Chapter Summary

Izuku conducts a little experiment about family.
Meanwhile the U.A staff are very attached to their resident green bean.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku scribbled in their notebook, to the average onlooker it would look like they were dutifully taking notes on a particularly interesting physics theorem, to anybody that looked closer they would realise that they were writing in their secret code, and to anyone who knew the code, it was apparent that Izuku was in fact making notes on their teachers, and more specifically their personalities and reactions to certain things. Izuku had spent quite a few days pondering the issue of whether or not to consider their teachers as family or not, ultimately, they were unable to accurately determine their own feelings on the matter, since they'd never had an extended family before, and thus had no frame of reference as to how close one needed to be to someone to consider them family. The next obvious conclusion had been to test how familiar they could act with everybody before they got uncomfortable, the plan had been to slowly ramp up the level of familiarity over the course of a few weeks so as not to rouse suspicion. Now, two weeks into the experiment and things were going surprisingly well, nobody had said anything, or seemed to be annoyed by Izuku's friendliness, in fact they had adapted, and begun to respond in kind, so while the plan had originally been estimated for about two months, it had in fact progressed far more rapidly that Izuku could possibly have predicted.

While it took some longer than others, it seemed that almost all of the staff seemed to be perfectly comfortable with the nearly familial closeness that Izuku had been subtly progressing towards. Izuku was taking note of their latest interactions, it was a good thing none of the teachers had realized what they were doing.

Nemuri was the first to catch on to what Izuku seemed to be up to, but

she didn't realise it at the time, being Shouta and Hizashi's best friend, she naturally assumed that she would be Izuku's aunt, so at first the odd looks they would give her every time she talked about it to someone were confusing, eventually she concluded that maybe she was pushing boundaries just a bit, and backed off. So it was a surprise when Izuku suddenly started being incredibly friendly with her. She thought that maybe they'd finally accepted her as their aunt, and while she wanted to go right back to telling anyone within earshot, Anan had convinced her not to, or rather, they begged her with the promise that they'd listen to her proud and excited rambling when they were at home. So until Izuku outright called her their aunt she was content with silent squeals of joy whenever they approached her to talk. They'd listen to her gossip with keen eyes, probably hunting for more information to go into those notebooks of theirs.

While Izuku was busy scribbling notes in their book right after every interaction they had, they probably thought they were being subtle, Nemuri found it amusing. She slowly noticed that Izuku had been getting closer to her colleagues as well, oh well, she doubted that she could reason through whatever odd experiment was going through their mind.

Anan was just happy to have someone who was willing to listen to their nerdy ramblings, or, at least, someone new, their wife and friends had heard their safety lectures and space facts about ten times over by now, and while they were always happy to listen to Anan, often being genuinely interested in whatever they were saying, it was a different feeling to talk to someone who was learning all of this for the first time. Izuku's eyes always lit up whenever the two of them conversed, and of course, Anan was always happy to listen to their newest analysis, and they were quite happy to give their input as to the possible dangers of the quirks and ways to minimize them, because while Izuku was quite adept at spotting the abilities and limits of the quirks they analysed, they never really thought of how precisely someone would be able to practice quirk control, in a way that would ensure minimum collateral damage.

Unlike their wife, they never assumed that Izuku would consider them family, but they'd been pleasantly surprised when they realised just how familiar Izuku was trying to be with them, then again, they could just have been reading into things, but Nemuri had assured them they weren't. It didn't matter really, Anan was content just to hang out with Izuku, whatever they thought of them.

Ryo had always been endeared to the young child who seemed so

curious and yet so hurt, he could see a bright spark in their heart, but it was shrouded in so much pain, it had taken so long for them to truly come out of their shell and become the bright little genius they all knew and loved. He had tried his best to help them in any way he could, even if it just meant somewhere to hide when things got a bit too loud, and later, be their therapist. As such he had an intimate knowledge of their past, how well and truly alone they'd been, and the nightmares that plagued them to this day, it was surprisingly easy to get them to open up, he supposed that having one of your closest kept secrets spilt for all to hear on the first day that you meet someone leaves very little for you to hide. He knew their behaviour well, and was quick to notice the sudden change in behaviour, he always wondered what brought it on, but he was starting to form some suspicions.

Ryo wondered if they thought they were being subtle, or perhaps he was at an unfair advantage since most of the methods they were using and questions they were asking were things he had told them around two weeks ago when they'd curiously asked how he got his patients to open up to him. He suspected now that they had wanted to learn for the purpose of this study they were conducting, it was quite amusing really.

Ken had always kept some space from Izuku, while he was not trying to avoid them in any way, it just so happened that he wasn't truly able to interact with them. At first it had been because they were just so shy, and later it was simply asking for trouble, while he was glad they had come out of their shell, it seemed that they had gained, or perhaps, stopped hiding, a penchant for mischief. It was rare to find them simply being peaceful, they apparently liked to cause chaos whenever they felt like it. Ken was considered the sanest person on staff at U.A, a title that didn't mean much considering the people he was surrounded by, it seemed that every day his colleagues were embroiled in some kind of harebrained nonsense, not that he tried to stop them, he just, didn't get involved. Izuku on the other hand, was an absolute delight, even when they were causing trouble they seemed to be so genuinely polite about it, apparently they didn't quite realise that the habits of the adults around them were less than normal.

Lately Izuku had been showing an interest in literature, and while he was incredibly confused, he welcomed the opportunity to discuss the finer points of poetry with them. Although he had a sneaking suspicion that they were less interested in the actual content of the discussion, and more in simply talking to him, as they have consistently managed to divert the conversation almost every time.

Knowing Izuku, this was probably the most roundabout way of accomplishing their goals, but as long as they were trying to be subtle he wasn't going to correct them.

Kazumi didn't like children, at least, the younger ones, there was a reason he only taught the third years, any younger and they were simply too naïve to realise the true dangers they'd face out in the field, some of that was to be blamed on the teachers, of course. In her opinion the previous heroics teachers had been too soft, luckily their replacements, Kan and Aizawa, made it a priority to drill it into their students' heads that they were putting their lives at risk by becoming a hero. Izuku was different, this kid had already been through hell, and they didn't expect much more from the world, so unlike his students, they didn't have a rose-coloured view of the world, and that made it significantly less stressful to talk to them about heroics. They were quite enthusiastic of course, and Kazumi was all too happy to talk at length on the topics of weapon safety and combat strategies.

She first noticed their little experiment around a week ago, in hindsight she really should have noticed it earlier, given the number of times they almost slipped up. It was rather fun to pretend not to have noticed them calling the staff their family on more than one occasion, and then quickly move on, hoping nobody noticed their choice of words. Oh well, at least when they finally admitted it, nobody would be surprised.

Hirohito was known to most of the staff as someone who couldn't keep out of trouble, even while teaching he would often leave a clone in the teachers' lounge to mess with everyone, all the surprise he'd cause was fully worth the occasions where the others would walk up and poke, or when he was being particularly irritating, punch him, just to make sure he was the real one. So it was no real surprise that Izuku was far more brazen about their troublemaking when they were around him, often telling him of their plans to, snoop around, and often going to him for information. They were quite an endearing gremlin, and despite their uncanny ability to sneak around unnoticed, even by a room full of pro heroes, they seemed to lack any kind of tact, anyone with a brain could see what they were trying to do, and they all thought that it was adorable that they would go through such lengths rather than simply ask a question.

Unlike what most people thought, he could be serious at times, and currently he saw that this was really pointless, everyone knew what Izuku was doing. He wondered if he should bring it up at some point, rather than letting them run through this whole rigamarole, but every

time he tried they would try they simply deflected the question, he supposed he had no choice but to wait it out.

Higari had never been the best at reading people, xe much preferred the company of xyr machines, much more sensible and far less prone to have exceedingly complex social expectations, there were exceptions to that rule of course, xyr colleagues, for instance, they were always fun to hang around with, and always understood that xe wouldn't take part in anything that xe didn't want to. Another exception was Izuku, they were similar to xem in so many ways, and perhaps it was that familiarity that allowed xem to realise precisely what they were up to the second that they started their little experiment. Although, they acted far differently with xem that they did with the rest of the staff, more obvious, xe did appreciate it, xe probably wouldn't have caught on if they didn't, or perhaps they simply overestimated how oblivious Higari could be.

Izuku would often hover around the labs whenever they wanted to speak with xem, and conversations usually turned to the topic of whatever little creation Higari was working on at the time, from support gear to weapons, they seemed so genuinely interested that xe promised to teach them how to make their own gear someday. Perhaps xe was getting far more attached that xe had initially realised.

Sekijiro never expected Izuku to even consider being friendly with it, from the first day they had shown up, it had kept its distance, after all, it didn't want to scare the poor kid. Soon enough however, they had approached it with several questions, questions about how its quirk worked, and questions about its hero work, and none of the questions asked had even a hint of judgement or fear, unlike what it was used to from everybody, even its own students. Not that it blamed anybody for being scared, it was already physically imposing, adding onto that its quirk and well, let's just say it wasn't difficult to see why it chose to go into underground heroics. Still, there was this kid who was half scared of everyone they met, and they still talked to it, and in turn Sekijiro shared stories of its work, and occasionally stories about the times it had worked with Aizawa on cases, which seemed to both amuse Izuku and irritate Aizawa to no end.

When it figured out what they were doing, it was definitely confused, there was a variety of reasons for Izuku not to want to get close to it, not least of which being the rivalry it had with their father, although it supposed that could be considered more of a friendly competition. Still, it barely had any idea what to do about the whole situation, but if the kid insisted on being attached, it supposed it didn't mind either.

Izuku heard soft whispering as the adults around them conversed about something or another, they were far too focused on their notes to truly care about whatever they were doing.

“All I’m saying as maybe we should just tell them!” Katou’s exclamation caused Izuku to look up from their notes only to find everyone staring at them.

“Why is everyone looking at me?” they asked, suddenly very aware of the precious experiment notes on their desk, sure, none of them could read the code, but they couldn’t help but feel shy about the fact that they’d basically been trying to worm their way into the closely knit group that was the U.A staff.

Ishiyama sighed “Izuku, you’re, not being as subtle as you think you are.”

“What?” Izuku knew what he was implying, but, they really didn’t want to think that they’d been found out.

“Seriously kid, everyone knows about your little experiment, we’ve just been trying to figure out how to tell you” Kan shook its head in amusement.

“Oh.”

Kurose nodded in agreement, “yeah, and, for the record? We’re all fine with what you’re trying to do.” Okay, now Izuku was definitely dreaming, they bit the inside of their cheek to check, nope, not a dream.

“Well, *maybe* you could quit bein’ so shifty about it” Takeda joked, and Izuku couldn’t help but giggle.

“I guess I was doing things the hard way, again.” Izuku grinned, they really should have expected this, everyone had been so nice, it really was silly of them to go through all of this, well, at least it worked out in the end, and they had found the answer to their original question, and they could safely say that the teachers at U.A fell very firmly within the category of ‘family’.

Chapter End Notes

> Would any of you believe me if I said that everything until now has been almost entirely unplanned?

My actual story outline (however scatterbrained it is) begins here.

Anyways, there's gonna be a half-year time skip between this chapter and the next one.

See you all next week!

Chapter 31: A ghost in the vents

Chapter Summary

Catching up with our green bean!
And finding new ways to be a helpful gremlin.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Over the last few months, Izuku had come to see UA as their second home, it was only natural, after all, almost all of the staff was their family, Nedzu being the exception as their mentor. The school seemed, far less grand than when they first came here a year ago, the feelings of awe and wonder replaced with a sense of cozy familiarity. If you had told them before that they would think going to UA was 'nothing special' they would probably have thought you were crazy, and yet, here they were, wondering how they ever thought that UA was anything to be awed by. Obviously it was still *the* best hero school in the country, and they were damn proud to be able to say that they went there almost every day, but they were no longer fawning over every detail, in fact, the intricate workings of the school had faded into the background for them.

That wasn't to say that they had tuned it out completely, but they had gotten so used to everything being in certain places that they simply expected things to be the way they were, and any change in that was a little jarring. Case in point, the suspicious looking spot on the wall just above the floor in one of the hallways where a neon blue splotch about the size of their thumb sat. It could have just been a stain of some kind, someone's quirk misfired and hit the wall, but they would have known about any incidents like that, besides, no current students, hero course or otherwise, had a quirk that was even *capable* of doing something like this, and no matter how bright some students' highlighters were, they most certainly didn't *glow*. Their next best guess was due to the location of the splotch, which was only a few feet down the hall from classroom 1-H, they went through their mental catalogue of that class's current projects, and landed on one particular student who had created a tracking paint that was almost impossible to get rid of if you didn't have the solvent. Izuku sighed, they'd have to tell Bibi Higari that xyr students weren't being careful

with their projects, and hopefully xe could get the solvent from the student in question.

They wandered deeper into the school, slipping into the vents whenever they had to avoid any students who, for one reason or another, weren't in class at the moment, they eventually made their way to Nedzu's office. The doors automatically opened with the familiar creak that played from the almost imperceptible speaker attached to the corner of the wood, and closing behind them when they entered. There was a rumour going around the student body about Nedzu's office being haunted because of those doors. In all fairness to those students, Nedzu had very purposefully made the doors out of wood specifically so that he could pull off this little trick.

Nedzu himself was nowhere to be seen, Izuku chalked it up to him having to deal with an important situation somewhere in the school, or he was just spying on some of the classes for the hell of it, it was a fifty-fifty chance really. So even though they were *supposed* to be learning from him right now, they settled for cracking open one of their textbooks and doing some of the practice questions. According to Nedzu, they had been learning at an extremely fast pace, they were already learning things from the last year of middle school, not to mention they'd already mastered analysis, and from there Nedzu had moved on to other fields of study, such as battle strategy and psychological trickery. They had been honestly a little unnerved by some of the tactics Nedzu described, but they couldn't deny that they were effective, and some of the more harmless methods were fun to apply to their life, especially when used on their family, most of them anyway, Uncle Ryo never fell for those tricks.

Izuku hummed to themself, they'd been waiting for some time now, it was about time for Nedzu to get back from wherever he'd scurried off to. And right on que, the vent access behind the desk opened up and Nedzu hopped into his chair.

"Good afternoon Izuku, shall we begin?"

Izuku nodded and they opened their notebook, not the one they had their analyses in, although this one was similarly encoded, this one held the notes from these lessons. Nedzu started by quizzing them on the previous lessons, not normal questions, this was Nedzu after all, these were closer to debates. Nedzu would give them a scenario, and they would have to use their current knowledge to make a favourable outcome within a given amount of time, all the while Nedzu would be counterarguing their points and trying to throw them off, and at the

end they'd have to identify the tactics Nedzu had used in his arguments.

"Alright, this one should be easy" Nedzu smiled sharply, and there was tactic number one, setting an expectation, call something easy to do and people get overconfident, or call it hard to do and people get nervous, either way they start slipping up, Izuku knew better than to fall for that. "A raid mission, your enemy is a large organized crime group of approximately seventy people stationed in a formerly abandoned factory on the south end of Hosu, they are suspected of being behind a string of kidnappings, you have no information about any of the quirks at play. You have ten minutes to come up with a team and a strategy"

"Do I have time to do reconnaissance?"

"Unfortunately no, but you do know that most of the people involved are relatively untrained."

Izuku nodded, mind racing a mile a minute to think of all the factors at play, firstly they had to figure out which heroes they'd need on the raid team, it wouldn't be a big team, maybe four heroes. It was incredibly irresponsible for whoever was planning the raid not to have any information of the quirks, but they'd work with what they were given. They'd have to use a variety of powers and fighting styles rather than tailoring for any specific threats, not to mention the possibility that the group had the kidnapped victims as hostages. Their first thought was to focus on the heroes who were known to operate in Hosu, Ingenium was an easy choice, quick and precise in combat and able to get any hostages out of danger, even though factories were closed spaces with lots of clutter and Uncle Tensei was less effective in those, he was capable enough for the job. Manual was also not really an option, he was a fantastic support focused hero, but they needed the ability to get in and out quickly. And with hostages being a possibility that automatically ruled out Endeavour, Izuku's own dislike of the man's attitude aside, he had one of the highest collateral damage rates of any active hero, not to mention that he *really* didn't play well in a team.

Eight minutes left.

From there they started thinking about the nearby areas, or heroes that didn't have a set turf, if they were going into this without any recon time, it would be beneficial to have someone who could scout ahead quickly and brief the team of anything. Likely an underground

hero, and they'd have to be decently powerful as well, unfortunately their mental catalogue of underground heroes was limited to the ones who had worked with their Dad or Uncle Sekijiro, from that pile, they remembered one called CopyCat, she had the power to mimic any emitter or transformation type quirks in her vicinity for a short period of time and, according to Uncle Sekijiro, was very talented at stealth, she was much less active these days on account of her children, but that was a safe bet. And Crimson Riot was always a good choice for combat scenarios and he would be in the area, plus he had one of, if not *the* lowest collateral rates even counting the one incident in the beginning of his career.

Six minutes.

They still needed a medium range fighter, just in case their enemies had a quirk that made it difficult to get close, long range was out of the question, once again due to the relatively closed space they'd be fighting in. There was only one other hero who patrolled nearby, in the next city over, and fit the bill, Kamui Woods, he'd only been a hero for three years, but he had been steadily climbing the ranks and seemed to be a capable fighter.

"You have four minutes left Izuku" tactic two, pressure, Izuku had been keeping track of the time in their head, Nedzu knew this, he'd only said that to stress them out.

"I'd have a team of Copycat, Ingenium, Crimson Riot and Kamui Woods, I'd send in CopyCat first to relay basic details and have Crimson Riot lead the charge, Ingenium and Kamui Woods should focus on getting any civilians out of danger and then join the fight." They started confidently, any hesitation now and Nedzu would pounce on it immediately.

"And if the group has hostages?" Nedzu tilted his head, both of them were constantly scanning each other's faces and movements for any sign of weakness, it was like a dance, and even though Izuku was still a bit shaky, they could hold their own well enough.

"Kamui Woods is able to immobilize large groups of people very quickly, I imagine he could deal with that easily, especially if we have CopyCat mimic his power for double effectiveness" another immediate answer, they only had two and a half minutes left to prove their strategy after all.

"And if one of your team gets taken out of action, I imagine it would

be rather demoralizing, and that *would* be on your hands if someone died" Izuku paused, tactic three, guilt tripping, yes, it would be on their conscience if someone got killed, but it wouldn't necessarily be their fault, it would be on the head of whichever villain killed them, death was a risk of the profession, and something to deal with *after* the mission was over. If Izuku had a moment, they might have laughed at the fact that they would never have even thought something like that last year, they'd probably have fallen for the trick in an extreme sense, and even now they'd had to stop and reason it out, wasting about twenty seconds.

"As I was saying, in combat I'd have Crimson Riot at the front, negating most of the offensive options that the villains have, and I'd have Kamui Woods and CopyCat behind him acting as support, with Ingenium being the main offensive fighter."

Thirty seconds left.

Nedzu looked Izuku dead in the eyes, "are you sure about your strategy?" Tactic four, doubt, making them second guess themself into wasting time or changing their strategy for a less effective one, Izuku almost paused but knew that they had to answer quickly.

"No, given the lack of information, any strategy I come up with will have a million holes, but it's the best I could do on short notice" their signing was rapid and almost too fast to keep up with as they hurried to answer in the time limit.

A small beep signalled that time was up, Izuku visibly relaxed as the stress dissipated. Nedzu simply nodded "that was adequate, although you really need to be a bit better at hiding your emotions, particularly fear, or, at least feign some level of control, I do appreciate that you didn't try and say that your strategy was perfect, overconfidence has been the downfall of many an empire after all." Izuku grinned at the praise while noting down the suggested improvements in their book.

The rest of the lesson was spent learning interrogation techniques, most of which were alright, and some of which Izuku decided were only to be used as last resorts.

It was a while after lunch when they decided to sneak their way into the teachers' lounge, if their memory served correct, only Uncle Kazumi, Bibi Higari and Bibi Anan would be in there at the moment. As they were shuffling through the vents, they noticed that the student who had spilt their project earlier was cleaning up the neon stain,

probably hoping that they wouldn't get caught and reprimanded for being careless with their work.

They dropped into the teacher's lounge as usual, saying hi to everyone before settling in at their desk.

"Bibi Higari?" Izuku looked over to where xe was working, xe hummed to indicate xe was listening "one of your students spilt some of their tracking paint on the wall near the classroom, they cleaned it up, but I figured I should let you know."

Xe just sighed wearily "great, it sounds like I'll be doing *yet another* lab safety lecture" xe wrote it down on xyr notebook before getting back to work.

"I can just imagine their shocked face when they realise that you found out" Bibi Anan giggled.

"I'll just tell her that the ghost told me" xe said grinning "I mean, it's technically true."

Izuku huffed in amusement, the ghost of UA had become a widespread rumour among the student body, after Izuku had accidentally dropped the vent grate into the 1-C classroom while they were snooping around, luckily Papa wasn't there at the time, or he'd probably have given them away by laughing. After that however, they decided to play up the whole 'haunting' idea just a little bit, making just a little noise whenever they thought it would startle someone. There were even rumours about the ghost being omniscient and that it would tell a teacher if you did something bad, while some argued that they'd done mischievous things without being told on. Actually Izuku only told on students if their actions put themselves or others in danger, and they never really said anything about harmless fun.

"Hah, those rumours have actually made those kids behave, it's a miracle really" Uncle Kazumi said, he was looking over the files of his current class, marking down improvements and critiques, he sighed "if only that ghost could make them focus on actually improvin' themselves, every sparrin' session seems to be the same with this lot, I'm tempted to sit 'em all down and lecture 'em until they get it through their heads."

If only the ghost could help, huh? Izuku had a suspicion that they definitely could, although, maybe not directly.

Uncle Kazumi looked amused at their expression, "what is it

Chickadee? You look like you've got a bee in your bonnet" Izuku looked at him confused.

Bibi Higari shook xyr head "she means you look like you have an idea."

Izuku nodded, but refused to elaborate and started writing in their notebook. Everyone looked a little wary at the feral grin that had plastered itself on their face and wisely decided not to ask, after all, they'd never do anything truly harmful.

Later that day, a student from class 3-A was joking with her friends, when she opened her desk drawer and found a sealed envelope with a little green ghost drawn in the corner, her friends cooed that it *must* be a love letter, maybe from that girl in 3-C she had been admiring, she shushed her friends with a giddy grin and opened the letter, inside was not a love letter, her face paled as she read each line, a detailed list of just how damaging her energy quirk could be if it grew out of control, from melting everything within a ten foot radius to actual explosions, it also went into rather horrific detail about the precise nature of the injuries she could cause, and at the bottom where you'd expect the sender's name to be, it was simply signed "- a Wraith". She knew her quirk was powerful, she had been praised for it her entire life, but she never thought it could be that *bad*, even Kurose-Sensei's speech hadn't unsettled her this much. Maybe she would focus a little more the next time Kurose-Sensei lectured them on quirk control

In another desk in the classroom of 1-B, another student finds an envelope, also with a little green ghost, he'd been having a bad day, some of his classmates were picking on him for his weak quirk, and he guessed it was true, it wasn't all that powerful, all he could do was make a small illusory creature that he could control and see out of, he'd stopped really paying attention in quirk training, even though Kan-Sensei had been pushing him to try a little harder, after all, what good was trying to improve a useless quirk? He opened the envelope cautiously, if it was another trick he was *going* to cry. The letter inside went into depth about just how versatile his quirk could be if applied to the right situations, that his quirk could be used for recon, or distraction, and that he'd make an excellent stealth and surveillance focused hero if he practiced increasing the range of his quirk, and maybe if he practiced hard enough he could make bigger creatures which would massively increase his intimidation abilities. He stared at the letter in awe, looking to see who sent it, only to find it was simply signed "- a Wraith". He smiled, maybe he *could* do this after all.

Izuku admired their handiwork from the vents, maybe now those students would start taking things seriously, soon, all the students would learn what it meant when they found an envelope with a little green ghost.

Chapter End Notes

> Did I make the rumours about a ghost just so I could make the Wraith pun? Yes. Yes I did

Chapter 32: Sleepy words

Chapter Summary

A soft moment leads to a new development.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Patrol days were usually the highlights of Izuku's week, not that they didn't enjoy spending time with their family, but there was something about the simple rush of adrenaline that went through them every time they set off running. The nipping chill of the autumn air was making them extremely grateful that their costume was layered and soft, Eraser had evidently also put some extra layers on underneath his normal costume. The cold was far more noticeable during patrol, while the daytime sun killed some of the chill, running around at night was a different story, with the wind buffeting at them, latching onto any bit of exposed skin and sending a trill of ice through their limbs.

Today seemed to be one of those days, where criminals seemed to be coming out of the woodwork for no reason at all. Days like these were usually the days that they'd come home bruised and exhausted, luckily, days like these were rare. Days like these also meant that both of them would be a lot less lenient on whatever criminals were stupid enough to put up a fight, Izuku *almost* felt sorry for them. The other person who would probably be suffering through this night would be Detective Tsukauchi, most of the other police officers would have been run ragged by the time night fell, and then they'd be stuck with the paperwork for all the arrests, Leaving Tsukauchi and any remaining officers to deal with the night shift. Izuku always toned down their tricks on these days, normally it was fun to annoy any officers or detectives that showed up to arrest whatever criminal they'd caught, but doing that today would just feel like kicking an injured puppy.

Around halfway through patrol they had to stop and catch their breath after a fight, it had started normally and then grew progressively more annoying as the criminal they were fighting kept

pulling out weapon after weapon from his pockets, *where did he keep getting those!?* Izuku might have thought it was his quirk if he didn't obviously have a snake mutation. The fight had gotten particularly tough after he managed to hit Eraser with a *literal taser*. They took him down quickly for that, and if they were a little rougher than normal, and if they broke his nose, well, surely nobody would blame them. Luckily the voltage must have not been that strong because Eraser managed to shake off the shock a little while after that, the fact that the cloth that made up his costume was also mildly insulated probably helped.

"Wraith? Something on your mind?" Izuku's eyes were drawn away from the criminal lying prone on the ground, Eraser was looking at them with what some might call anger, or disappointment, Izuku knew better, Dad was looking at them with concern.

They took a deep breath and shook their head, "nothing, really, I was just angry" it was an impulse really, whenever someone hurt the people they cared about, they had to fight to control the red hot rage that would threaten to drown them. It hadn't really happened before they'd met their parents, back then they'd only feel sorry, they'd duck their head and try to bend to the whims of the people who hurt them and others. Uncle Ryo always said it was because they cared too much, that they would care about someone so much that they took those peoples' pain and made it their own, that they'd always been angry about the injustices around them, it's just that now they had permission to express it. Izuku knew enough about psychology to know that he was probably right, but that didn't mean that they didn't feel bad about letting that anger take a hold of them, it was difficult to shake off years of being the quiet speck of dirt under everyone's shoes.

The police showed up to arrest the criminal, and Izuku did their usual routine of disappearing into the shadows, they really didn't have to, most of the MPD knew that they existed by now, and that they worked with Eraser, and most of them who'd had the misfortune to encounter them multiple times also knew about their penchant for harmless mischief. But it was fun to pretend like they weren't there, just to see if the officers could spot them before they decided to show themself.

Now Izuku stood on the rooftop, they felt someone pull back their hood and a hand ruffle their hair, they ducked away from a grinning Eraser, they smiled underneath their mask, they probably needed to get a costume that was more than a hoodie, jeans and face mask, but it worked, for now. "Good job back there kid" pride shined in Eraser's eyes and they beamed, no matter how many times they heard praise,

it still made their heart jump.

As predicted, patrol ended with both of them covered in minor injuries, Izuku could almost feel the soreness they'd wake up to tomorrow morning, they sighed and stretched, feeling little twinges of pain from where dark purple bruises would soon bloom. Thankfully, their patrol route ended fairly close to home, so it would only be a short while until they could flop into bed and drift off into sweet unconsciousness. They stifled a yawn, or at least they tried to, Eraser huffed out a laugh at their pathetic attempt to look like they weren't practically dead on their feet, they weren't normally this tired after patrol, they figured they'd be taking the slow way, even though they could function perfectly fine, they knew that their parents would worry if they didn't.

Shouta watched Wraith try their best to keep up with him, but after only a few meters it was clear that they were probably going to trip over their own two feet if they tried to parkour all the way back home. He sighed, they were stubborn, and definitely wouldn't ask for help unless they absolutely had no choice, they really needed to learn when to call it quits and ask for help, in the back of his mind he heard a voice calling him a hypocrite, it sounded suspiciously like Hizashi. He took one look at Wraith before scooping them up and carrying them the rest of the way home, which seemed to be the right call seeing as they had fallen asleep somewhere along the way, it was adorable really, like a little kitten curled up against his chest.

The second he stepped into the apartment he heard the clicking of a photo being taken, he looked up to see Hizashi grinning at them with his phone in his hand. Shouta smiled at him "hey sunshine" he said softly, so as not to wake up their kid. He put them on the couch while Hizashi grabbed the first aid kit, he wasn't really hurt, just a bit frazzled from that incident with the taser, but it never hurt to double check after getting home. Izuku woke up for long enough to make sure they weren't too heavily injured, they only had a few scratches on their arm, they smiled sleepily at Hizashi as he put plasters over the cuts. Shouta looked over their arm, their skin was a patchwork of scars, some were more faded than others, the injuries they gained tonight wouldn't scar, then again, it would be difficult to tell when the scars overlapped like that, Izuku would know, they had their scars memorised, they could tell anyone exactly where they got each and every one of their scars, Shouta hoped they'd never have to add to that list of tales. Hizashi finished patching them up and ruffled their hair affectionately, he turned to put away the first aid kit.

“Goodnight Izuku” Hizashi said as Izuku drifted back to sleep.

“-Night.”

If Shouta wasn’t right next to the couch he might have not heard the quiet sound, it was half a word, the voice was stuttering and soft from both sleep and years of disuse, and if there wasn’t only one possibility of who spoke, Shouta would never have recognised it, having only heard quiet giggles or little noises from them before, Hizashi hadn’t noticed it yet. “Izuku? Kid?” Shouta looked at them incredulously. They blinked their eyes sleepily and made a confused noise, apparently not having realized what they’d said.

Hizashi also looked confused at his sudden alertness “what’s going on love?”

“Izuku, could you repeat what you said?” Shouta said as gently as possible.

“What I said?” Izuku still looked confused.

Shouta shook his head “never mind, I guess it was just because you were tired.”

“What?”

“Kid, you spoke.”

Izuku was fully alert now, they, *spoke?* Their head was spinning, they hadn’t even *tried* to speak for a long time now, they must have been so tired that their mouth simply moved on it’s own. Izuku repeatedly opened and closed their mouth, they searched for that tightness that would wrap their throat whenever they tried to speak around people like a snake stealing their words. It wasn’t there, they could breathe, thinking back, they hadn’t felt that tightness for a while now, maybe they had just gotten so used to not speaking that they hadn’t noticed when they were able to speak.

“H-hel-llo?” they could hardly recognize their own voice, and their stutter was present in full force, whether because they were nervous or because they just hadn’t used their voice in four and a half years.

They could see their parents’ eyes shine, Dad reached out and ruffled their hair, and Papa was smiling softly. They tried again, but their throat was starting to hurt, they frowned. “You don’t have to speak if it’s difficult” Papa said gently, sitting on the other side of them and

pulling them into a loose hug which Dad quickly joined. They nodded and went quiet, nuzzling into the hug, they didn't really know why the tightness had gone away, maybe Uncle Ryo would be able to tell them, but for now they returned to sleep.

"Dad, Papa?"

"Yeah little listener?"

"L-lo-ve y-ou" they stuttered through their words but they meant every syllable.

They felt their parents' hug tighten just a little as they both spoke at the same time, "we love you too Izuku."

Chapter End Notes

> I really want to know, how many of you thought I made a formatting mistake at first?

Chapter 33: Cerulean Embers

Chapter Summary

Izuku encounters a strange man.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku liked to wander, it was a fact, they could never sit in one place for long, at least, not without something to do, so they took up the habit of seeing just where they could sneak off to. It was a habit that they kind of owed their current life to, since their penchant for exploring is what started them down the path to being a vigilante, it was also a habit that they were *trying* to curb, as it caused no end of stress to their family. In fact, one of the few rules that their parents had insisted on enforcing, was that they had to tell at least one adult where they were going if they wanted to sneak off somewhere that people wouldn't be able to find them. It was a rule put in place after one day when they'd snuck off to explore one of the training grounds at UA while everyone was busy and caused their entire family to panic when they realized that they weren't in the main building anymore. It wasn't until Nedzu managed to locate them on the cameras that everyone calmed down. They weren't too upset about the rule, they knew that they were granted quite a bit more freedom than a regular kid and it was easy enough to follow.

They were currently wandering around their favourite park, their parents were within sight and yelling distance, but still, Izuku had followed the rule and told Papa that they were going to go look at the ducks in the pond. They watched the ducks flap about in the water, recognizing at least two of them, and realizing that one had a few new ducklings following her, they usually brought something to give them, but they had forgotten this time. A group of teens sat nearby tossing stones into the water, clearly aiming for the ducks, Izuku frowned, feeling anger simmering beneath their skin, if they didn't have firsthand experience, they might have wondered how on earth someone could be so utterly cruel. They looked back to where their parents were seated, laughing about something, and then looked back at the group of troublemakers, they really shouldn't say anything,

these kids were at least a few years older than them, and it would cause a scene. But then one of the kids actually managed to hit one of the ducks, causing it to cry out in pain and flap away in a panic, which caused a chain reaction of panic through the rest of the ducks, all the kids laughed. Izuku scowled and stalked towards the group, with a small voice in the back of their mind telling them not to do anything that Uncle Ken wouldn't do.

Another kid picked up a large rock and aimed at the one lone duck who wasn't able to fly away, that would certainly injure the poor thing if it hit. The boy leaned back and tossed it, laughing at his cruel act, only to be caught off guard when Izuku caught it before it could fly out of reach. The weight of the rock nearly threw them off balance, and it was only thanks to their training that they didn't end up falling backwards onto the soggy grass.

"Hey! What's the big idea? That was gonna be an amazing shot!" the boy in question shouted at them indignantly, with a chorus of agreements from the rest of the gaggle.

Izuku scowled, they didn't think these jerks would bother knowing JSL so they grabbed their pocket notebook and quickly scribbled out a very angry sentence explaining that they were trying to stop the group from hurting the ducks. Which just got more laughs, typical, no matter, they didn't really think they could change these kids' minds, bullies would be bullies until they were opposed, and they didn't have the means to oppose them, sure they could kick their asses, but that wouldn't really teach them a lesson, and it would get Izuku in trouble. They glared at who they figured was the leader of this obnoxious crowd, but they weren't quite as scary as their Dad yet, so it just got them more laughs.

"Hasn't anyone ever told you it's rude to laugh at people?" a gravelly voice spoke from nearby, Izuku's gaze flickered to a shaded spot under a tree where a figure leaned. The group of teens looked startled and, now that they were in the presence of an adult, decided that their best bet was to scarper off to find a new target. Meanwhile, Izuku eyed the stranger warily, they slipped their hand in their pocket, feeling the comforting weight of the pocketknife they carried. It wasn't that late, but the park was starting to empty, and they had wandered just out of sight of their parents, who would probably be walking over any minute looking for them, but until then they had to deal with this random guy.

The stranger stepped out of the shadows and Izuku had to hold back a

gasp, the man was covered in burn scars, and it looked like his skin was held together with, *were those staples?* Izuku didn't like to judge by appearances, but this guy looked like an absolute mess, *literally* falling apart at the seams, could he not afford proper medical care?

The man took a step forwards and Izuku pulled out the pocket knife, brandishing it at the man, hopefully deterring any attacks.

Dabi had just wanted to hang out at the park for a while, there was a nice lady who sold fresh baked buns nearby who never questioned why a guy as terrifying as him was hanging around. He just wanted to stay out of trouble, and hopefully get back home without any incidents. He was honestly going to ignore the dumbasses throwing rocks, but then a kid showed up playing hero, and suddenly he just *had* to intervene, sometimes he wished he didn't have such a conscience. And *then* the little gremlin *pulled a knife on him*, whose feral child was this!? Then again, he had to commend the kid on their street smarts, Dabi couldn't quite tell how old the kid was, but they were still smarter than some adults that he had met.

"Relax kid, I was just leaving, no need to get feisty" Dabi held his hands up in surrender, backing off slightly, the kid frowned but lowered the knife, only a little bit though, did they really think they could fight him? Or were they just hoping to stab him and run?

They backed up a little bit before pulling out that notebook, they wrote down something before tossing it at him, clearly smart enough not to get within grabbing range. Dabi picked up the little thing, and he could see the sentence they'd shown those idiots earlier, along with a bunch of incomprehensible scribbles, in the bottom of the page he saw two questions, *'who are you'* and *'do you know sign?'*

He tossed the book back to them, "yeah, I know sign" suddenly he was glad he knew all those useless languages the old man made him learn, seriously, English and JSL he could understand, but why on earth did he need to know Spanish, French and German? "And you can just call me Dabi." That was basically who he was now anyways, not *him*, not anymore, *he* died the day he decided to run away.

The kid scrunched up their nose "okay then, in that case you won't mind if I don't give you my name" Dabi smirked, he wouldn't expect anything less at this point. But it seemed like the kid had more to say "do you need any help?"

He was honestly surprised by the question, most people avoided him

like the plague, or decided that he was a good target to pick fights with, he knew why, the scars that covered his body were intimidating. And yet this little child asked that question with such sincerity that he couldn't just ignore them like he wanted to, "I'm fine kid, really, the scars are just a quirk side effect." That was partially true at least, but the frown on the kid's face just deepened and he realised that there was no way that they believed him.

"Even then, you should probably go to some kind of doctor" now *that* was out of the question, not if he didn't want to be recognized and sent right back into that hellhole of a house.

"Look kid, I appreciate the concern, but shouldn't you be running off to your parents now?" Dabi really wanted to get home to his little decrepit apartment before it got dark, he didn't fancy dealing with whatever drunk assholes decided to pick a fight with him. He didn't have time for some brat's misplaced concern.

For some reason, the kid didn't seem to get the hint, or maybe they got it and were just being annoyingly persistent. "No, those could get infected, and you're clearly not doing a good job of taking care of it yourself."

Dabi was starting to get irritated by this kid, couldn't they just do what everyone else did and *leave him alone?*

Suddenly a pair of voices rang out, one significantly louder than the other

"Kid!"

"Come on, it's getting late."

Dabi was suddenly very glad that he was hidden from the view of who he presumed to be the kid's parents. He took the opportunity of the kid's distraction to slink away, or at least he tried to, the kid spotted him, but didn't try to stop him, only staring at him with intent eyes, just like the look Fuyumi used to get when she saw someone in trouble. Dabi got the sinking suspicion that this wasn't the last time he'd see this kid.

Chapter End Notes

Dabi is honestly so fun to write.

Chapter 34: Denial denial and more denial.

Chapter Summary

Dabi meets an annoying vigilante.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

also mild warning for implied child abuse at the paragraph beginning with "He heard a child crying"

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Dabi wasn't fazed by most things. He lived in the shitty part of town, he saw drunkards and thieves roaming the streets, the dreary apartment he called home was right next to a known drug den, there's been more than a few murders committed in the cafe he frequents, and he sees people try to kill each other over a few bucks almost every day. The point is, Dabi was used to the worst that humanity had to offer, and he couldn't be bothered to bat an eye, he could see atrocities being committed and look the other way without hesitation. He wasn't some kind of *hero* who held others' lives in his hand, to crush or cradle as he saw fit, people lived, people died, and none of that had anything to do with him.

So *why the hell* did he keep finding himself in these situations!

This was the question going through his mind as he stood between a rapist and their would-be victim, he had his own skin to save, he didn't care what happened to the lady behind him, he had places to be, he didn't have time to deal with the person in front him. It was the natural order of things, the strong preyed on the weak, and if you were one of the weak you either lay down to die or scratched and tore and bled until whatever soft parts that weren't burned away were shaped into daggers.

He could have left well enough alone, leave it for whatever hero would slink by the area, that was their job after all. But Dabi stopped believing in heroes a long time ago, they were just more of the strong, masquerading as saviours, only to turn around and prey on anybody that they could crush under their oh so merciful boot.

And as he felt sizzling flesh give like candlewax under his fingers, he couldn't help but smile, a twisted grin sitting unnaturally on his face. The screams were loud and for a brief moment he worried that someone would come investigating, but nobody did that around here, they weren't stupid enough to walk to their deaths. So he kept pushing his fingers into the person's shoulder, relishing in the sounds of hell coming to claim another soul. He thinks the woman behind him also screamed, but she was quiet, well knowing of the consequences of drawing attention to yourself.

Eventually he got the mind to drop the person, who took one look at the contempt in Dabi's eyes and ran. The woman behind him pulled out a knife, he just stared with a bored expression and left her to her own devices.

These encounters were nothing more than his own want to hurt being given an opportunity; he was simply abiding by his own selfish desires. He had no care for the people he helped and certainly not for the ones he hurt, he was ***not*** a hero.

He walked past the local bar, hearing the usual all out brawl going on behind the counter, nothing alarming, maybe things would get exciting, maybe bones would get broken, or even an eye gouged out, but it was unfortunately unlikely. Someone got dragged out by the bouncer, it was none of his business, the offending party had a gun in his hand, it would be asking for all kinds of trouble to get involved, and he would much rather keep living. He kept walking, directly away from the direction of what was probably going to be another murder. Not that anyone would care, whoever died, they'd just move on with their lives, maybe the bar staff would care, only for the annoyance that would be cleaning the bloodstains, he doubted it would even be reported out of worry that the bar would be shut down.

There were only a few buildings left before he reached his apartment, it was a straight walk, as long as he didn't stop for anything.

He heard a child crying, and the yelling that accompanied it, he sped up, walking past the lone alley, not sparing a glance to see the young teen, covered in bruises, bleeding from their left arm and wearing a torn dark blue dress, or the woman screaming at them. It was getting dark, he sped up, the apartment was behind him, he needed to turn around and go home. The woman raised her hand to hit the child, a flash of tingling pain went through his shoulder as the blow landed right on the joint. The woman looked furious at being interrupted and raised her hand again, this time, with a speed and ferocity that wasn't

natural. Dabi let his arm blaze with blue fury and reached up to block the attack.

His arm went out, a piece of his soul was being smothered, a metal staff appeared between his face and the woman's hand, and the person holding it had wedged their way in front of him, it seemed that whatever hero was assigned to this dump had finally decided to do their job.

He backed off, staying as close as he could to the mouth of the alleyway, as Eraserhead dropped from the rooftops and started asking questions. Dabi might have mistaken the guy for a vigilante if he hadn't heard the rumours that floated around about the underground hero. Most people were scared shitless of the guy. Dabi figured he couldn't be that scary, after all, he was a hero, and those kinds usually had a strict moral codes, then again, he was a *hero*, there was no telling how harshly he'd act with a perceived criminal, what he thought he could get away with.

And that said nothing of the smaller person that had planted themself firmly at the teen's side, watching the woman like a predator watching its prey, no, that wasn't quite right, they were looking at her like *they* were the prey, ready to claw and bite to stop a predator from killing. That made no sense, they were a hero, right? Probably a newer one given that he had never heard of any heroes matching their description, but those were the strong kind of people, the weak kind never made it that far, the weak kind burnt up before they could.

It seemed that the police were being called on the woman, and Dabi took it as his que to get the hell out before he found himself being interrogated. Just as he slipped away, he saw the unidentified hero whisper something to Eraserhead, who just gave them a *look*. He couldn't recognize it, he thought he might have seen that look before, the kind that threatened, that said, *'you're making a mistake, you're going to regret it'* but this look wasn't sharp enough for that, it was close, but it was all soft around the edges.

He stomped into the apartment, barely sparing a grimace at the couple who couldn't be bothered to go into their apartment before making out, he slammed the door to his apartment, knocking down a random bottle in the process, he groaned, that was going to be a pain to clean up later. He didn't technically have a separate kitchen, just a counter between it and the rest of the living room, he glanced through his cupboards for dinner; he looked up, the window above his sink looked straight at the opposite building, the only thing worth looking at was

the little vine growing on the outside. He nearly stumbled back when he saw the mystery person casually sitting on the windowsill.

They knocked on the glass and gestured for him to let them in, he debated opening it and shoving them off, but the drop wasn't far enough to kill, and he suspected that if they lived the fall they would just climb right back up.

He sighed and opened the window, letting them hop into the mess of a place he called his apartment.

"What do you want *hero*?" he was already irritated.

"Vigilante, not a hero" they signed as they poked around his living room.

"Really, you seem awfully friendly with Eraserhead, I can't imagine he'd willingly team up with a vigilante."

"He's kinder than he seems" they didn't elaborate, instead they introduced themself "I'm Wraith" they held out their hand.

"Dabi" he didn't shake their hand "now could you get out of my apartment?"

"No" well they didn't have to be such a little shit about it. Dabi sighed and resigned himself to his fate.

Izuku thought that Dabi was one of the messiest people they'd ever seen, not only did he look like death itself, but his living room looked like a hurricane had blown through it. They sighed, not even their old warehouse had been *this* bad!.

"So is there a *reason* you came here, or should I just burn you to a crisp for wasting my time?" Dabi let embers spark at the tips of his fingers, a threat, well, Izuku was used to threats, and the kind of people who made them. Dabi was not that kind of person, he had saved someone, he had done it even though he had no reason to, he wouldn't go through with this threat, but just in case, they stayed out of reach.

"Just making sure you weren't hurt." It was the truth, they might have been curious about him when they first met, but they also hadn't expected to run into him ever again, and honestly they were glad to see that he didn't look any worse than he had a few days ago.

“Well, you’ve made sure, *now get out*.” They really should take that advice, they *should*, but if they ever did what they *should* they would have been dead a long time ago. They inspected the motheaten couch with a mild interest.

“So how’d you get those burns?” When they first met him, they had assumed he’d been in some kind of fire, but, he had a fire quirk, and he *should* have the paired fire immunity, him being burnt at all was theoretically impossible, but Izuku’s entire life was a theoretical impossibility, and here they were, existing in complete and utter spite of all kinds of common sense. Dabi must not have any fire immunity, but then, why did he even use his quirk?

Dabi visibly tensed, a grimace tried to hide itself in a grin as sharp as it was dangerous, “you know, you really shouldn’t be asking people these things *Wraith*, someone could get hurt.”

Izuku didn’t back down, but they manoeuvred so that they had a straight line to the window. “Alright, I get it, touchy subject, how about a different question” they’d asked before, but maybe he’d answer to Wraith instead of some random kid, “do you need help?”

“No” Dabi said tersely “and I’m getting real sick of people asking that. Now **get out.**”

Well, this was getting nowhere, Izuku knew when to beat a tactical retreat, “alright, I’ll see you around!”

“What? No you won’t you-“ they leapt out of the window before they heard the end of whatever insult Dabi was throwing at them. They caught back up to Eraser who had been waiting for them on the roof of the building opposite.

“So? What did you find kid?” Eraser asked, while looking them over for any signs of injury, he had agreed to let them speak with Dabi, but he had been incredibly hesitant about it.

“I think, he needs help, but he really doesn’t want to admit it” Izuku mused as the pair returned to their patrol.

“We should just drop it” Eraser said, that should have been the end of it, but they heard the waver in his voice, he wasn’t convinced.

“Or we try and befriend him.”

“… We can make a plan when we get home, Hizashi will pout if we

leave him out of this” Dad had a fond smile on his face.

“Yeah, and maybe I can get Uncle Ryo to teach me some tricks to crack this guy with” Izuku agreed. If anyone in their family was a rational, normal person, they would have left well enough alone, unfortunately, they were a family of heroes, and heroes never turned their backs on those that needed help.

Chapter End Notes

The amount of denial that Dabi has is genuinely hilarious to me

Chapter 35: Dabi's horrible no good very bad week

Chapter Summary

Some people just want to be left alone, unfortunately for Dabi, heroes are a stubborn bunch.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Dabi ducked into an alleyway on his way home, taking the long way around just to make sure he wasn't being followed. Logically, he knew it was probably a series of coincidences, but his instincts told him that something was up, and he didn't survive this long without listening to his instincts. He had spent the entire day without running into a single hero, and he wanted to keep it that way, it seemed that every day this month he'd ran into a hero for one reason or another. And all of them seemed unusually focused on him, and although most of them just stared for an inordinate amount of time or repeatedly glanced at him out of the corner of their eye, this week, some had been stupid enough to try and *talk to him*. He wondered if he'd done something recently to get on the MPD's radar, or, a more horrifying thought, what if, by some twisted miracle, he'd been *recognized*.

He'd been so careful to hide anything that could link him to Endeavor, everything except for his eyes, when he ran away, he hadn't wanted to raise suspicion by trying to buy coloured contacts, even if everyone thought he was dead. And by the time the world forgot him, it would have been even more suspicious if the people who knew him as Dabi suddenly saw him with a different eye colour. He shook his head, he was being paranoid, there was no way he'd been recognized, Touya had been legally dead for five and a half years, nobody would ever make the connection between him and a dead kid.

The first time he'd really noticed it was when he'd passed by another battle, the villain had been defeated and the hero stood victorious. Dabi looked over at the buildings, basically undamaged, this wasn't unexpected, the villain wasn't that strong, and the hero was Cementoss, one of the few heroes that he had a begrudging respect for because of the sheer lack of collateral damage his fights incurred. That

was mostly normal, but then Cementoss saw him, and his gaze lingered for a few seconds before he was distracted by some police to file a report, and Dabi suspected he might have just kept staring if he hadn't been pulled away.

The first hero who'd been bold enough to talk to him was Midnight

It was on a dreary Monday. Dabi had been walking home when he was stopped by some police, apparently a villain attack was happening and the area had been cordoned off while it was dealt with. He could have taken a detour like everyone else, but he was tired and stubborn and didn't feel like getting mugged on unfamiliar streets, so he stood around. It was about ten minutes later that the villain was finally apprehended. He wasn't really paying attention to most of the fight, but at some point Midnight got close enough to knee the villain in the gut and then put her hand over their nose, using her quirk to put them to sleep.

Afterwards she left the sleeping villain to the police and, as Dabi tried to slip away unnoticed, she approached him. There was nobody else around, just him, her, and the police who were too busy with the villain to notice him.

"Hey handsome~"

Nope, no, no thank you. Dabi wasn't sure what she was trying to do but he wanted exactly *none* of it. He turned around to walk away.

Midnight scrambled to stop him. "Hey, wait, okay, rough start, sorry."

He scoffed and sidestepped her "I'm not interested."

"No, no, sorry, I wasn't *actually* flirting with you" she looked apologetic enough, "why are you even still here? It wasn't really an exciting fight".

"Didn't feel like going the long way home" he continued walking, she'd eventually have to turn back around.

"Fair enough, I'll see you around sweetie" and while it was said with a wink and a smile, Dabi got the distinct feeling that was less flirty and more, *friendly*, weird.

Now if that was the only time, it would have been less weird, but then it happened *again* on Wednesday.

Dabi was starting to regret ever accepting his neighbour's request to run some errands for him, but the old man couldn't do it himself and he offered to pay Dabi for the job, and, well, he needed the money. Unfortunately, he had forgotten that this particular store happened to fall right within Ectoplasm's patrol route, and even more unfortunately, Dabi happened to bump into the hero on his way back, literally.

He looked down muttered an apology and tried to move out of the way, but Ectoplasm seemed intent on speaking to him.

"Oh, no need to apologize buddy, I should have been paying more attention to where I was going" well, that was a first, a hero taking fault for something? If it wasn't the polite thing to do here, Dabi would have been surprised.

He turned and walked away, he felt the hero's gaze burning into the back of his skull, and just as he turned the corner he noticed what was presumably one of Ectoplasm's clones turn the corner behind him.

He stopped and turned to face the clone "what do you want hero?"

"Nothing, just, checking something" the clone proceeded to do a very poor job of pretending like he wasn't staring at Dabi, "what are you doing here anyways? This place isn't exactly the kind of place a kid like you would hang out at" the clone asks, nodding towards the store.

"Running some errands for my neighbour" he tried to walk away.

"Huh, you must be a nice neighbour."

"Nah, just needed the money" he did not want anyone getting the wrong idea here, he was not, under any circumstances, going to be labelled a good person by a hero of all people.

"Right… well, I'll get going then" the clone disappeared quickly. Dabi turned and walked away, wondering what the hell that was.

And then on Thursday, he was sure he was going to get arrested on the spot.

He'd managed to find himself in yet another alleyway fight, this time thwarting an attempted murder, the victim had long since run off, leaving a very angry lady with a knife, and Dabi, who was keeping her at bay with a flaming arm. All of a sudden he heard two bangs, and the would-be murderer was clutching her arm as two small objects

bounced off and onto the ground, rubber bullets if Dabi had to guess, which also meant that he had a damn good idea of what hero was interrupting his accidental vigilantism. He also noted that his quirk was still very much active and there was no way he could plead self-defence, he sighed, hopefully he wouldn't have to spend too long in jail for this. The penalties for vigilantism varied heavily depending on all sorts of factors like how much collateral there was, and if they had caused any injuries or killed someone. Sometimes people were let off with little more than a slap on the wrist and others served months of jail time. This was not his first offence, and last time he had evaded capture by simply threatening the officer, his face scars had been covered by a face mask so he wouldn't have been recognized, but he knew he wasn't going to get so lucky a second time.

There's another shot, this time making the woman drop the knife she was holding, she almost dived for the knife, but the hero was pointing a pistol directly at her, and another one at Dabi. He sighs and holds his hands up in surrender, and Snipe lowers the pistol he was pointing at him. His expression was hard to read under the mask, but Dabi was fairly certain the hero was thoroughly annoyed by his presence.

"Well, this was unexpected" Snipe muttered to himself while handcuffing the woman, Dabi suspected that the hero wouldn't just let him leave unnoticed.

Snipe turned to him and asked "so you're the one who stopped this varmint from causing trouble?"

Dabi raised an eyebrow, "not much I can do to deny that I guess" and then, more aggressively, "so what do you want *hero*? Going to turn me in for vigilantism?"

He heard a weary sigh from Snipe who muttered something under his breath before turning to him "look pardner, there's no need to be such a cross-patch, I ain't going to turn you in, just, try not to get in over your head?"

If Dabi had been suspicious before this was ringing alarm bells in his mind, there was no way that this hero was just going to *let him go*. He slipped away anyways, checking over his shoulder every few meters, surprisingly Snipe hadn't even tried to follow him.

And you'd think the weekend would be safe? Nope. Saturday was probably the most stressful day.

And this time the forest fire was not even his fault.

Dabi had just wanted to take a walk through the woods after a long day, and some stupid kid set off some firecrackers in the middle of a bunch of *very flammable trees*. And then that had spiralled into the predictable outcome.

The problem was, Dabi did very poorly with large fires, he knew it was ironic, he was perfectly fine with his own blue fire, but put him in front of those orange and red flames and suddenly it's like he's fourteen all over again.

He stood still, he willed his legs to move, to run, but all too soon the fire had spread and surrounded him, he felt his breath quicken, the smoke burning his throat.

He didn't know how long he'd stood there, frozen in place, but the sizzling of water on flames snapped him out of his panicked stupor. The fire department had arrived, and with them was two rescue heroes, Thirteen was nearby, clearing debris and using their quirk to smother the smaller fires, and further away he could see Hound Dog helping some firemen carry a group of people out of danger.

He backed away when Thirteen approached him, but he must have still been out of it because he couldn't find the will to push them away when they gently guided him towards some ambulances. One of the EMTs gave him a concerned look when she saw his burn scars, but he assured her that they weren't from this incident, which didn't seem to do anything to convince her, but he was still one of the least injured people, so she just sighed and let him go.

And then the heroes walked up to him. *Great.* This again.

To their credit, they had been checking on almost everyone they could, so it wasn't *that* weird, but after the week he's had, he couldn't help but be suspicious.

"Hey, are you alright?" Thirteen asked softly.

"Yes, I'm fine, actually I was just on my way home" maybe his tone was a bit too harsh, but he didn't really care.

Hound Dog tilted his head, looking at him with literal puppy eyes, "we're just checking, you seemed pretty out of it earlier" he looked at Dabi's burn scars "I'm guessing you don't do well with fire."

Great, just great, they're *concerned* Dabi scoffed and left, the heroes didn't try to call after him, returning to check the rest of the people.

Honestly he was starting to get annoyed, so when he didn't run into anyone on Sunday, he breathed a sigh of relief, he was sat on his couch as the sun went down, more relaxed than he had been all week.

And then there was a noise at his window, he looked up, expecting it to be a stray animal or something, when a masked figure stared back at him.

God fucking damn it.

He stared at Wraith for a few seconds, before making the decision to ignore them and hope they go away.

They didn't.

He sighed and opened the window, just when he thought he was done with weird heroes.

"And what are *you* doing here?"

"Checking in on you, that fire yesterday was something huh?"

Dabi stared at Wraith, how the hell did they know that? "What? How?"

"I have my ways" they were just as cagey as the first time he'd met them, would it kill them to be a little bit less mysterious?

"Oh fuck off, are you stalking me or something?"

"I mean, it's not like anyone's going *out of their way* to look for you if that's what you mean"

"But if they so happen to see me?" Dabi sighed, he had a sinking feeling that his weird encounters had something to do with this, the whole situation *had* started a few days after he met Wraith.

"Well, then you wouldn't blame them for checking in on you?"

"Did you send a bunch of heroes after me?"

"I mean, I don't control what they do, all I did was mention you a few times, and heroes did what heroes do, if anything, you should be thanking me" they flopped onto the couch he'd just been occupying.

He felt a headache start to form, he was not going to like the answer to this one bit “why should I be thanking you?” he asked cautiously.

“Several of them wanted to just confront you to make sure you were okay, cause you know, all those burns cannot be good for your health. Actually, my grandma said that if she ever met you she’d hit you with her cane for being stupid about your health.”

“… Get the hell out of my home. And tell your hero friends to back off.”

“On one condition”

“What?”

“I’m personally going to check in with you every other week.”

Dabi could feel his flames burst out of his skin as his arm lit up, he was about ready to torch this bastard. Wraith just looked unphased, they sat on his couch, staring at him while he threatened to burn them alive. It was a game of chicken and Dabi was slowly loosing.

“Fine” the flames retreated back under his skin, “every month” if he didn’t have a choice he would at least negotiate the frequency down.

“Deal” they held out their hand for him to shake.

He didn’t shake it.

“Well, I’ve got to go, can’t keep Eraser waiting!” and they hopped back out of his window.

Dabi stared at the open window, what the hell had he just agreed to?

Chapter End Notes

> This entire chapter was just me going "how much can I annoy Dabi?"

Chapter 36: The rich kid table

Chapter Summary

Tenya invites Izuku to the hero gala to meet his friends, he did not take into account that Izuku lacks any kind of class.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

Signed and Spoken Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku dug through their closet to find the nicest pair of clothes they had, which happened to be a green button up shirt and a pair of black pants, and of course their bright red shoes. They looked in the mirror and felt pretty fancy, they had about half an hour left until the Iida brothers showed up, probably enough time to tame their mess of hair. They spent about two minutes combing through tangles before giving up and finding Papa to help them, and that still took another fifteen minutes to make their wild hair even mildly presentable.

Izuku hadn't gone to any of the hero galas thrown this year, mostly because their parents didn't like to make appearances at the various celebrations that hero society regularly threw. Dad obviously didn't go, being an underground hero who needed privacy and also being a major introvert meant that he would rather die than attend a party. Meanwhile Papa was exactly the kind of person to go to a party, but preferred to stay at home instead of play the game of social niceties and politeness that this kind of gathering demanded.

Tenya on the other hand had been going to the gala for years now, being a legacy kid meant that he got an automatic invitation along with the rest of his family. And this year he'd invited Izuku as his plus one, something that was technically allowed as most heroes would bring their partners or best friends, but according to Tenya the legacy kids never brought plus ones because they didn't usually have friends that wouldn't be other legacies. He had also been very insistent about the fact that they needed to be on their best behaviour during the gala.

Papa had given them the basics of the, completely nonsensical,

unspoken rules that they would be expected to follow, and they both had a laugh at the snobbishness of some rules, with Papa making them promise that they do their best, but also that the only rules they strictly *had* to follow were the normal family rules, as well as whatever Uncle Tensei said was important.

The doorbell rang and Izuku waited for Dad to open the door before immediately pouncing on Tenya, letting themself fall into his arms. Tenya was used to this form of greeting by now, and should have caught them flawlessly, but he took several steps back and forced them to quickly regain balance as they were left half-falling. They pouted and looked at Tenya, slightly miffed that he hadn't hugged them back, before they noticed just how nicely he was dressed. With a clearly tailored dark blue suit that matched Uncle Tensei's almost exactly except that, where Uncle Tensei had a blue tie, Tenya had a bowtie of the same colour, not to mention that his hair was nicely slicked back. Izuku looked down at their own loosely fitting shirt, slightly wrinkled pants and ran a hand through their mess of hair, they suddenly felt incredibly underdressed for the occasion, they sighed and hoped that it would be passable.

"Sorry, I didn't want to mess up my suit" Tenya said apologetically.

Izuku nodded, instead turning and hugging their parents who had been talking to Uncle Tensei and repeatedly making him promise to call them if *anything* goes wrong.

Dad gave them a headpat and leaned down to whisper "listen, try to be on your best behaviour, but if anyone gives you trouble?" he gave them a small grin that would worry Uncle Tensei if he could see it "*give them hell*".

Izuku gave him a grin in return and nodded subtly before Tenya dragged them outside, he talked the entire time they walked down the stairs, what to expect, who's probably going to be there, Izuku made a mental note of any interesting heroes he mentioned that they wanted to observe. When they got to the apartment's parking lot, they immediately noticed the Iida family car, which was far nicer than any other vehicle in the area. Izuku signed hello to Tenya's parents and then stayed quiet for the entire ride to the gala while Uncle Tensei rambled.

They looked out the window as the car slowed down outside of a very, *very* fancy looking venue, there were heroes everywhere, and Izuku noted that all of them looked incredible, every single person in this

gala was rich and it showed. The car was parked in the designated lot and everyone made their way over to the front of the building, Tenya looked at them and gestured to the group of paparazzi at the door, “do you want to sneak around them and meet back up inside?” He asked them. They nodded and made their way behind the reporters who were busy taking photos of the Iidas. Once inside they were stopped by one of the security guards who demanded to see their invitation, they panicked for a moment before Tenya walked up to them, apparently having managed to get away from the prying eyes of the media. He let the guard know that Izuku was his plus one, and then dragged them off to a more secluded corner of the venue.

“Alright” he whispered “I’ll have to be out there for a bit longer, just greeting the other heroes and exchanging pleasantries, if you don’t want to go with me you can just head to that table over there” he gestured to a table. Izuku hadn’t noticed it at first, seeing as it was in the far corner of the venue and was also slightly hidden thanks to the way the decorations had been set up, they smiled gratefully at Tenya before slinking off, hopefully they wouldn’t get noticed.

Luckily for them, most of the heroes were only just arriving and most were distracted by the paparazzi, so the back of the venue was basically empty, and they managed to sneak over to the table without incident. They sat there, looking around at the various heroes and feeling woefully underdressed for the occasion as people wandered around the gala making small talk and gossiping as they sipped champagne.

They heard two sets of footsteps wandering over to the table and Izuku, not wanting to deal with anyone without Tenya to save them from a social faux pas, hid as best as they could by sitting behind one of the large potted ferns. Surprisingly, whoever was approaching the table didn’t see them, two kids, probably around Izuku’s age, both were blonde, although one had much brighter hair than the other, and they were both dressed as well as everyone else. More legacy kids, they wracked their brain to place which heroes these two might be related to, the one with the black streak in his hair looked vaguely familiar.

But before they had any time to think where they’d seen someone like that before, Tenya returned with two other kids, a boy with two toned red and white hair as well as a rather large scar on his face, and a girl with black hair who immediately sighed when she saw the two already at the table.

“Kaminari, Monoma” she greeted them as she took a seat, the boy sat next to the girl, making it a point to avoid the other two, Izuku smiled in amusement as they saw Tenya supress an eye roll at the other boy’s clear disdain.

“Yaoyorozu! Todoroki! And is that Iida?” the one named Kaminari exclaimed, “dude I didn't know you were here already!” he got up to give Tenya a pat on the back that made him look like he would rather be anywhere else. Izuku noted that Kaminari seemed to be far more casual than anyone else at the table, maybe he was here as a plus one, or maybe he was raised in a casual environment like Uncle Tensei.

At least Izuku now knew who two of these kids’ parents were, Todoroki was one of Endeavor’s children, and while they hadn’t been aware that the Yaoyorozus had a daughter, it was obvious to see the family resemblance once they looked.

At some point Todoroki looked around, trying to ignore the overly excited chatter that streamed endlessly out of Kaminari’s mouth, and his eyes locked onto Izuku who, now that Tenya was here, had shuffled out from behind the plant. “Excuse me, are you lost?” He asked, with a tone of voice that made Izuku feel like they were being judged as he gazed at them in a bored way, they shook their head as everyone’s eyes turned to them, they immediately wanted to shrink back, but they forcefully beat back their anxiety and levelled small smile back at Todoroki.

“Oh, I thought you went to see some of the heroes” Tenya said blinking in surprise.

“No, just waited here” they looked at the other children “are these your friends?”.

Monoma’s eyes widened a bit at the lack of surprise from Tenya “wait, Iida, is this the plus one you mentioned?” He asked, staring a little too long at Izuku’s now rumpled outfit.

Tenya nodded “yes, everybody, this is my cousin Izuku, don’t bother asking for their family name, they won’t tell you and neither will I.”

“Hello, I’m Izuku” they signed to the group, getting confused looks from both Kaminari and Monoma, a complete lack of acknowledgement from Todoroki, and a smile from Yaoyorozu.

“It’s nice to meet you Izuku” Yaoyorozu signed back at them, they were stunned for a second, entirely expecting nobody to understand

them.

Tenya gave them an encouraging nod as Kaminari piped up “dude, I didn’t know you had a cousin” he looked like he was pouting “why haven’t you invited them before?”

Tenya looked absolutely lost and looked at Izuku for a way to avoid the uncomfortable answer, Izuku shrugged “I’m adopted, Tenya didn’t even know I existed until last year.”

Once again Kaminari looked confused, Yaoyorozu just sighed “I’m sorry for the trouble, Kaminari and Monoma don’t know JSL” she explained, in a way that sounded like a parent apologizing for their children being rude. “They said they’re adopted” she said, drawing and “oh” of realization from Kaminari.

Monoma nodded before realising something “we forgot to introduce ourselves, I’m Monoma Neito son of the hero CopyCat” he paused, then started to explain a bit more, but Izuku beat him to it.

“I thought underground heroes didn’t really attend these types of galas?” They tilted their head, Monoma looked to Yaoyorozu who translated their words, he then looked even more surprised at the fact that they knew his mother was an underground hero.

“Well, mom always goes, she likes to socialize, and, I’m pretty sure I’ve seen other underground heroes here before? They just stay in the back to avoid the press.” He explained, Izuku nodded along, okay, underground heroes *did* show up to these things, Dad and Uncle Sekijiro were just weird, not like that was new information.

Kaminari cut in as Monoma tried to continue talking about his mother “I’m Kaminari Denki! My big sister is the hero Thunder!” He spoke excitedly, practically jumping out of his chair. That’s where they’d seen hair like his before, Thunder was a lower ranked hero but she was well known in her area despite only having been a hero for a few years now. This also explained Kaminari’s general difference in attitude, he wasn’t really a legacy kid and had probably only started going to galas after his sister gained some recognition.

“I’m Yaoyorozu Momo, I imagine my family needs no introduction?” It certainly didn’t, the Yaoyorozus had been heroes for generations, similar to the Iidas, and her mother was the CEO of one of the largest support companies in Japan.

Everyone then looked expectantly at Todoroki, he looked up and

stared at them for a second, before curtly saying “Todoroki Shoto, son of Endeavor” and going back to staring at his hands.

They nodded, not put off by the curtness, after all, Dad was the same way with new people, and Izuku themself tended to just, *not converse* with anyone if they didn’t want to, Todoroki was clearly only doing this out of politeness, and the fact that Yaoyorozu looked like she would scold him if he didn’t.

“It’s nice to meet you all” they said politely before taking a seat next to Tenya, feeling a little uncomfortable at all the attention, resorting to looking at the other kids and finding every similarity they could between them and their hero relatives as a way to pass the time.

And then, Kaminari asked the one question they had been dreading this entire time “hey Izuku? What’s your quirk?”

Tenya tensed up next to them and they froze, the best case scenario was indifference, the worst was quirkism, they doubted any of these kids were bold enough to attack them in this crowded venue, they eyed Todoroki, Endeavor was definitely quirkist towards anyone with a quirk he deemed ‘weak’, and while they hoped his son would be kinder, they didn’t really want to take any chances. Just as they were scrambling for an answer, Yaoyorozu saved them from answering immediately by saying “Kaminari! It’s rude to ask for someone’s quirk without telling your own first” she scolded, and Izuku was once again reminded of a mother scolding her unruly child, she said “my quirk is Creation, I can turn the lipids in my body into anything as long as I know its atomic structure.”

“Sorry” Kaminari looked embarrassed and Izuku couldn’t help but sympathize, that particular social rule was one they were well aware of, as it was the reason they couldn’t just ask about peoples’ quirks without being put in a very awkward situation. He turned “my quirk is called Electrification, it’s basically the same as my sister’s quirk except I can’t do the electric whip thing she does.”

That caused Monoma to scoff “please, it’s nowhere *near* as amazing as my quirk, Copy, I can copy the quirk of anyone I touch, so I can basically use the quirks of everyone in this room!”

Kaminari scoffed “that’s nice and all, but you just *try* to use something like Half-Hot Half-Cold” he pointed to Todoroki, that must be the name of his quirk “you’d probably lose control of it instantly.” Izuku made an educated guess, based on the name of the quirk and on

knowing Endeavor's quirk, that it was probably a dual fire and ice quirk of some kind. They wondered if the even split of his hair and, now that they were looking closer, his differently coloured eyes, had something to do with it. Maybe the 'half' part was being completely literal, and if it was Izuku thought it was one of the most uncreative quirk names they'd ever heard.

Meanwhile, Kaminari and Monoma had been bickering, with Monoma insisting that he could control any quirk he copied, and Kaminari daring him to prove it, and just as Yaoyorozu was trying to stop them Monoma reached out and touched Izuku's hand. He looked at Kaminari smugly before blinking in confusion as he stared at his hand on top of Izuku's, he raised his hand and stared at it for a moment. His confusion quickly turned to annoyance "hey, why can't I copy your quirk?" He demanded.

And they were right back to the same problem, they looked around the table, seeing four pairs of staring eyes, and Tenya, who was clearly trying to keep his composure, they sighed, well, it was bound to come out sooner or later, and they hadn't really planned on lying. They started to sign, before realising that it would be unfair for Yaoyorozu or Tenya to have to explain something this socially awkward. They took their pocket notebook out, they never went anywhere without it, and scribbled their message before handing it to Monoma.

"You can't copy what I don't have?" He read the note out loud, slightly confused, then scoffed "you need to word this better, this makes it sound like you don't have a quirk at all-" he paused as they nodded their head, "you, don't have a quirk, *at all*" he repeated, letting the words sink in, "I, I thought people like you were extinct?" He said incredulously, with an agreement from Kaminari, an all too familiar look of pity from Yaoyorozu, and Todoroki looked fully disdainful.

Izuku scrunched their nose, if these kids were going to start being quirkist they were going to leave and stick with Uncle Tensei for the rest of the evening, Tenya looked like he couldn't decide whether to lecture his friends or drag Izuku out of here before they started lecturing them.

They had planned to let it slide this time, before Todoroki decided to stand up, open his mouth, and say something that made their blood boil. "Why did you even bring your cousin here Iida? They'd probably get hurt with powerful quirks like mine being around" oh, okay, so *that's* how he wanted to play this. Tenya's expression went from

furious to scared in the instant he saw the expression on Izuku's face, it was the same expression they made whenever they were truly furious with someone, what Papa called their 'innocently dangerous' expression.

Before Todoroki had time to react, Izuku punched him, with only his surprisingly well-trained reflexes saving him from falling backwards onto the floor. He got up and stared at them, still with that bored-irritated expression, and then lunged at them.

Tenya immediately got in between them, but it seemed more like he was trying to stop Izuku from hurting Todoroki, and not the other way around.

"What was that!?" Todoroki exclaimed "I was trying to protect you and you punched me!"

"Okay, how about we all calm down" Yaoyorozu looked horrified at this display of violence from both Izuku and Todoroki.

Izuku ignored her "protecting me? How? By saying that I'm weak and useless? I suppose I shouldn't be surprised, Endeavour has been using that excuse to be quirkist without facing consequences for years, I thought maybe his son would be smarter, but I guess I was wrong." Well *that* caused a reaction, with Todoroki's face going from furious to confused and finally settling on annoyed as he went back to his chair and scowled at the table like it had personally offended him.

Izuku turned back to the others "does anyone else have an argument about why I'm inferior to you?" they asked as they stared down all of them, daring them to say something. The three of them at had the good sense to look ashamed of themselves.

The air around the table had become incredibly tense, and Izuku sighed before deciding to try and break the tension, they were still mad at Todoroki, but the others seemed apologetic enough. They scribbled something down in their little notebook before sliding it over to Monoma 'for what it's worth I do think your quirk is cool' he looked surprised by that, as did Kaminari.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, if you can copy anyone's quirk, that basically means you have as many possible abilities as people you can make physical contact with, your enemies would never be able to predict you!" they signed excitedly, and Tenya started relaying their words.

He looked stunned for a moment before returning to that smug attitude he had earlier “see, I told you guys my quirk was the best!”

Izuku shrugged “well, you’re all cool, I mean, Kaminari has raw power on his side, and he could probably paralyze people if he tried, and Yayorozu could make weapons and traps and first aid supplies, all of you have super powerful quirks, you just need to use them right.”

Yaoyorozu shrugged “you’re surprisingly good at flattery, but I’ve never been able to make more than a few small things before I’m too tired to make any more.”

Monoma piped up “and stupid over here” he pointed a thumb at Kaminari “can’t even use his quirk without frying his brain” Kaminari looked embarrassed and Izuku felt their eye twitch in irritation.

Izuku blinked and looked the two of them over, they turned to Yaoyorozu “does your quirk have that high of a conversion rate or do you not have enough fats in your body ?”

“Excuse you?” She said, sounding slightly offended.

“And Kaminari, how are you training your quirk? How is it possible that you fry your brain every time? That *has* to be causing some kind of damage.” Tenya sighed and relayed the message to Kaminari who just stared blankly at them.

Tenya took one look at his now thoroughly confused friends, and at the sparkle in Izuku’s eyes and shook his head “if you’re going to analyse them at least ask first” he reminded them.

Yaoyorozu’s eyes lit up “you, do, quirk analysis?” she asked, suddenly far more interested than she had been this entire time.

“Yeah, do you?” Izuku pulled out their pocket notebook and was immediately poised to start writing.

“I’ve had a passing interest, but my parents have gotten my quirk analysed recently, since I’m starting training soon and they wanted to find the best way for me to use my quirk, it was truly fascinating.”

Izuku frowned “really? Then, why can’t you make more than a few things at a time?”

She shrugged “I don’t know, it just happens.”

“Well, your quirk takes lipids, right? Is it running out of fuel?”

“Well. Maybe. Mother always says that my diet needs to be low in fats, and carbs” Yaoyorozu looked thoughtful.

Kaminari rolled his eyes “you guys have weird parents. I can’t imagine not being able to eat what I want.”

Todoroki had been silent the entire time, not even deigning to look at the group, but he spoke up with another scoff “your parents’ must be disappointed in you Kaminari, imagine having a child who can’t control their own quirk.”

Kaminari looked down, ashamed, and they swore they could see the beginnings of tears form in his eyes. Izuku’s eyes narrowed, okay, Todoroki being mean to them was one thing, but being this mean to someone he was supposed to consider a friend? Tenya put a hand on their shoulder to keep them from leaping across the table to demand that Todoroki explain why he thought he was so much better than everyone else. Honestly, if he wasn’t so lacking in expression they might have thought they were talking to Bakugo with the way he was acting.

“Leave.”

Todoroki looked annoyed “excuse me?”

“If you can’t stop being a complete asshole to everyone around you why don’t you leave and stay with your father? I’m sure the two of you would have so much fun putting others down for things outside of their control.” On the outside they were calm, but if he even so much as tried to argue they were ready to stand their ground.

Once again, comparing him to Endeavor seemed to strike a nerve, and Todoroki looked like he wanted to say something, but got up and stalked away, muttering under his breath.

Kaminari looked at Izuku, barely holding back tears, Tenya stared sadly at Todoroki as he was leaving, Monoma seemed to look a little, ashamed, probably thinking about what he had said to Kaminari.

The table was awkwardly silent for a second time that evening, and this time it was Kaminari who broke it.

“Thanks, for sticking up for me” he said, looking down at his hands before looking up at them and grinning “I didn’t even realised he

could be that," he waved his hand in the air, trying to describe it without insulting Todoroki. He looked ashamed "I can't believe you defended me even after I was kind of a jerk to you."

Izuku nodded, "yeah, well, I've only met one person, who didn't have *some* kind of reaction to my quirk status, and the rat isn't exactly normal, the best reaction I can expect is the one you and Monoma had, being surprised that I even exist." Tenya nodded in agreement as he relayed their words.

Kaminari nodded "I'm still sorry though" he tapped the table for a few seconds "hey, what's your favourite colour?" He asked, clearly trying to change the topic.

Izuku looked down at their green shirt and grinned at Kaminari, who chuckled "I'd say that's way too obvious, but my favourite colour is yellow, and that's not even because of my hair."

The conversation became far more friendly after that, although nothing stayed on topic for more than a few minutes with Izuku and Kaminari leading the discussion. They even managed to get Yaoyorozu to laugh a few times, which given her tendency to only smile politely at everything was a sheer miracle.

The time flew by and soon the gala was over, and they had to leave, but not without some last goodbyes.

"Hey Iida, you should bring Izuku next time too!" Monoma exclaimed as the group started splitting off to find their respective families.

Tenya looked at Izuku questioningly who shrugged, they really didn't like the party, too many rich people who thought they knew better, but they did like this small group of kids. "Why not?"

With the promise to return at the next gala Izuku and Tenya rejoined the rest of the Iidas and when Uncle Tensei asked what they did, Izuku and Tenya silently agreed not to mention punching Todoroki.

By the time they got home they were tired from all the socialisation and basically flopped on the couch the second that Tenya left.

"Hey little listener, how did it go?" Papa ruffled their hair as the cats curled up next to them, Dad had also sat on the couch and was listening intently.

"It went well, Tenya's friends are, *interesting*" they said.

“That’s legacy kids for you, even the nicest one is usually a stick in the mud” Dad said.

“Thunder’s little brother was really cool though, I think he talks even more than I do, and he’s funny” they laughed remembering the exaggerated faces Kaminari would make trying to make people laugh.

“He talks more than you? Now *that’s* a feat” Papa grinned mischievously before yelping as they threw a cushion at his face “hey! It’s true!”

“Did you do anything else?” Dad asked, probably expecting a normal answer like, another analysis, or maybe just wandering around.

“I punched Endeavor’s son.”

“Wait ***what?***” Papa looked both concerned and curious “what did he do to deserve that?” He asked.

“He was being quirkist to me and another kid” they said, frowning at the air as anger seeped into their voice.

Papa laughed “oh, *please* tell me you knocked him down a peg?”

“Zashi, we really shouldn’t be encouraging this behaviour” Dad tried to sound scolding, but he was also doing a very poor job at hiding his proud grin.

“I also lectured him and told him to leave, but I wasn’t expecting him to actually *listen* to me!” They grinned.

Izuku continued to talk about the gala, and their agreement to go to the next one as well, and eventually they were fighting back yawns as the sun had long since set. Eventually Dad convinced them to go to bed, and they could tell the rest of the story in the morning, they grumbled a bit but conceded. They didn’t actually go to sleep, instead talking to nothing as they thought about Tenya’s friends, they couldn’t wait to see them again.

Chapter End Notes

Oh my stars this chapter was *not* supposed to be this long

I know I made Shoto kind of a bitch, but also, remember how little he respected his classmates in the first season?

Also, Monoma's mother is an OC that was mentioned in a

previous chapter, and Thunder is the name I gave to the electric hero from the opening of Heroes:Rising.

Chapter 37: A talk about family, or the lack thereof.

Chapter Summary

> Wraith and Dabi's monthly meeting takes an unusual direction when a certain flame hero becomes the topic of conversation.

Chapter Notes

> --- : POV switch
> Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku was bored, why the heck was it taking Dabi so long to get home? The windowsill was getting uncomfortable, they could just leave and come back, but then there was the possibility that they would miss the chance to surprise Dabi when he walked into the apartment, they'd done it four times in a row and they weren't about to stop now. They had taken to counting the leaves on the vine that grew out of a crack in the bricks on the edge of the window, there were exactly twenty-two.

They double checked the count before deciding that maybe something was going on, they'd only talked to him four times before, five if you counted that one time in the park, and this would be the third time since they'd made that deal with him. They actively kept their distance if they happened to see him during patrol, no point in pushing boundaries that didn't need to be pushed, especially since he was only just starting to warm up to them. Even still, they knew roughly what time he got home each day, just before the worst part of the night started.

They waited for a little while longer before they heard the door slam open and a string of furious insults as Dabi stomped into his apartment, he didn't notice them at first, seemingly preoccupied with cursing the universe itself. Izuku decided to wait until he calmed down before they knocked on the glass. His eyes snapped up to meet their gaze, he looked up at the ceiling, muttering something that they couldn't hear before opening the window.

"Great, just who I wanted to see today" sarcasm practically dripped

from his words as he went right back to pacing around his living room, looking like he was about two seconds and a wrong word from throwing something into the wall. Izuku decided that their usual antics were not going to be appreciated today, and instead they stood next to the window and calculated the chance that they would make things worse if they tried to talk to him.

After about a minute of watching Dabi wear a track in the carpet, they figured that he wasn't going to calm down on his own anytime soon, "so, how was your day?"

He turned and glared at them "I don't know Wraith, how do you *think* it was."

"I'm guessing it was bad"

"Absolutely horrible, this has to be a cosmic joke" his voice raised again as he kept talking "I go down my normal route home and guess what? I get caught up in a damn villain attack, and to top it off that flaming piece of trash just *had* to be the one to respond to it."

Okay then, they barely needed to look to see the poorly hidden rage at this 'flaming piece of trash', they might be poking the bear here, but, "who exactly are you talking about?"

"Endeavor" just saying the name seemed to cause him physical pain, "that stupid fucking dumpster fire of a hero."

Oh, well that made a whole lot of sense, they'd probably be in a bad mood if they had to be in Endeavor's vicinity for an extended period of time too. "Him? Really? I didn't think he patrolled around here."

"I don't know, I guess he was in the area, my bad luck I guess."

"At least you were lucky enough not to end up as collateral" Izuku always wondered how Endeavor was still an active hero, they knew why, it was because he had one of the highest villain capture rates, the one compliment they'd begrudgingly give him.

Dabi frowned "it was pretty close, I almost got roasted, not like that would be an unusual feeling" he grinned sardonically "the bastard didn't even look to see who he almost hit."

Izuku had to supress a frustrated sigh, "what else were you expecting, its Endeavor, civilians are meaningless to him."

Dabi raised an eyebrow at that “huh, I was expecting less agreement and more surprise.”

Izuku shrugged “he’s been subtly quirkist for years, that’s never sat right with me” that was a bit of an understatement, but they weren’t in the mood to explain.

“Huh, you know what, that makes a lot of sense now that I think about it” Dabi said “he always said weak people weren’t worth o- *his* time” Izuku tilted their head at the abrupt change in words, what had he been about to say?

“Wait, you never realised he was quirkist? So why do *you* hate him then?”

Dabi shrugged “the guy is an asshole who couldn’t care less about the people around him, why wouldn’t I hate him?”

“I guess? I mean he really needs to watch out for civilians while he’s fighting,” for some reason that elicited a laugh from Dabi, some joke they weren’t privy to, “but if that was why people hated him, a lot more people would be calling for his head on a pike.”

Dabi supressed a laugh at the image of the old man’s bloody head being paraded through the streets, “maybe most people are stupid, they’d have to be if they can’t see him for who he really is” he let bitterness seep into his tone “or maybe they just aren’t close enough.”

Wraith shrugged “I don’t know, I mean, his son managed to bully his own friends without getting kicked out of the group for years.” Dabi tilted his head, so, the replacement was a bully who didn’t even care about his so called friends? He wasn’t surprised that the kid who was cut off from any influences outside of Endeavor turned out to be just like him.

“They’ll probably never kick him out, not when he’s Endeavor’s son” if there was one thing he had learned as a kid, it was that people cared a whole lot more about who his father was than about him, in the replacement’s case he’d be surrounded by other heroes’ kids who *definitely* wanted to get on friendly terms with the number two hero’s kid.

“Actually, he’s been avoiding them for a while, at least, that’s what I heard.”

“Now why would he do that? And why aren’t they begging for him to

come back?" He wasn't expecting an answer, it was just something for him to wonder.

"I don't know, but if you ask me, that quirkist asshole deserves it, maybe he'll learn that even weak people can stand up for themselves."

That seemed, a lot more personal than someone who was just hearing about this through the grape vine "it sounds to me like you do know"

Wraith looked around the room, "your place is a lot neater than the last time I was here."

"Don't change the topic, I want to know what happened."

"Well, my cousin is in the friend group, and when he tried to introduce me to everybody, I *may* have insulted Todoroki." Dabi raised an eyebrow, there was more to this story than a simple insult. Wraith stared at him for a while, before sighing "okay, fine, I punched him and then said I was disappointed that he was just like his dad."

Dabi cackled at that, imagining this tiny gremlin punch someone several inches taller than them, he wasn't sure if the replacement would hate being compared to Endeavor as much as he did, but that *must* have stung.

"Yeah, I probably shouldn't have done it, but I got angry, and he needed a reality check" they stomped their foot in annoyance and looked at the floor, just like Natsuo used to when he lost a game.

"You remind me of my little brother" he said it under his breath, not entirely realising that he had even said it out loud until Wraith's head snapped up to meet his gaze.

"You have a brother?"

Dabi paused, this was dangerous territory, and he could shut down the conversation now, but, it couldn't hurt to tell them a little bit, and it would be nice to talk about his siblings rather than lying on his couch feeling guilty for leaving them. "Yeah, I do, I have two siblings actually, a brother and sister, I'm the oldest, then my sister, and my brother is the youngest" he wondered what they were doing now.

"How come you've never mentioned them?" Wraith perched themself on the arm of his couch, leaning forward precariously as they listened attentively.

Dabi sighed, they would drop this line of questioning if he asked them to, but, he didn't have to give them *all* the details "I haven't seen them since I moved out, kinda hard to contact them with our father in the way." That and he was sure they'd absolutely despise him for letting them think he was dead and running away like a coward.

Wraith nodded, "shitty biological parents huh?"

"Mostly my dad, my mom was just, there." He remembered seeing the news a few months ago, what she did to the replacement, he wondered how much of that was real and how much of that was Endeavour's twisted narrative.

"Do you miss your siblings?" Now there was a question, did he miss them? He'd like to say no, to say that he could just cut that part of himself away for good.

"All the time" he missed Natsuo's fierce competitiveness and Fuyumi's unending smile, he missed playing pretend with them, he missed telling them stories, he missed being able to know if they were alright, he missed them in so many ways that words could not encapsulate it.

"My baby brother should be in high school now, I bet he's giving his teachers hell, stubborn kid that he is." He wondered if Natsuo still wanted to be a doctor when he grew up, no, he was growing up *now*, his baby brother wasn't such a baby anymore.

Wraith hopped off of the couch "what's your sister like?"

"Scared, she was always scared to do anything other than sit by and watch our father ruin our lives, but she's still my little sister, and she cared, even if she was a coward" he used to be angry with Fuyumi for never standing against Endeavor, but she'd always been the first to cover Natsuo's eyes and ears when the arguments got bad, and always had bandages and burn cream ready to fix his hands when he'd burnt himself for training.

"You really care about them huh? You must have been a good brother."

"Probably not, but I can't change the past" he was suddenly very glad his tear ducts had been burnt away, or he would have started crying by now, curse his emotional brain.

The silence was only a few seconds long, but it felt like hours before Wraith finally moved, they paused for a second, before reaching out

and patting him on the arm, “I’m sorry.” He didn’t know what they were apologizing for, but it was a nice sentiment. They moved to the window.

“I think you’d be a great brother, if you had the chance to be one again.”

They hopped out of the window, disappearing to the other building where Eraserhead waited, taking whatever warmth they'd intended that sentence to carry with them.

Dabi didn’t register sitting on the couch until he was curled up with his knees to his chest as the world seemed simultaneously endlessly vast and crushingly small.

If he had another chance huh? The idea was nice, to see Fuyumi and Natsuo again, to atone for leaving them alone in that accursed house.

But that would never happen.

Chapter End Notes

Surprise it's mild angst >:3

Chapter 38: A nice hero? Impossible!

Chapter Summary

Izuku gets sick, so Aizawa has to meet Dabi in their place.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue
Signed and Spoken Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Are you sure that I have to stay home? I could stay out of the fights, I just have to-” Izuku was cut off by a bout of coughs, Shouta sighed and handed them a glass of water. Izuku didn’t get sick often, Shouta could count the number of times he’d seen them get sick on one hand, and when they did it was never serious. Normally they weren’t this stubborn about going on patrol, if he said they had to stay home for the night, they would listen. However, today was the monthly check in they’d have with Dabi, and they were trying their best to pretend like they weren’t running a fever. Hizashi and him were going to make sure they stayed home, this was a pointless argument because, as Hizashi had pointed out multiple times now, they were in no shape to be running around the city.

“Kid, lie down, you’re not going and that’s final, the meeting can wait until you’re feeling better” Shouta ran a hand through their hair, Izuku fought to keep a smile off their face as they pouted at his words. If he had the choice, he wouldn’t be patrolling tonight either, he would be right here with his kid, unfortunately, there was no one who could cover his patrol route for the night.

“But I don’t want to mess it up, if I miss this one then he’s not going to trust me to show up on time the next time” they were on the verge of crying, Shouta recognized the beginning of a spiral when he saw it.

Hizashi smiled at them in sympathy “come on little listener, you know that’s not true, just tell him you were sick the next time you see him, he’ll understand.”

They pouted even more “but what if something happens today?”

“I can go check on him today alright? You’re not going anywhere

like this" Shouta offered.

"Okay, at least make sure he's alive" Izuku looked unconvinced but it seemed that they couldn't think of a reason to argue since they didn't try to push back on the point.

"Don't worry, I'm sure it's going to be fine, there won't be any kind of problem, right Shou?" Hizashi looked at him pointedly, which was fair, he wasn't the most tactful person in the world.

"Exactly" he grinned, giving Hizashi a quick kiss, to which Izuku made a fake gagging sound, causing Hizashi to laugh. Shouta moved to the door as he pulled his capture weapon around his shoulders, **"I'll be home by morning, so try to get some rest, okay kid?"** they smiled and nodded.

Patrol was relatively normal, stopping muggings, the occasional murder, drug deals, all the usual, although, he got some odd looks from the police officers when they realised that Wraith wasn't with him. It was weird to think about, people used to stare when they realised that he *had* a vigilante with him, some officers even tried to arrest them before he stepped in to stop them. But now? People expected it, the officers would glare at the little gremlin but they wouldn't try and arrest them if they didn't want Shouta to shut up and leave. Most of the detectives automatically looked around for Wraith whenever they saw Shouta at a crime scene. Even he was always just a bit surprised at just how much he'd gotten used to having Wraith by his side while patrolling. On the few occasions when they couldn't join him, Shouta found himself talking to thin air and being momentarily confused when he didn't get a response.

After patrol was over, Shouta made his way over to the apartment building where Dabi lived, now what? Izuku always waited at the windowsill for Dabi to get home, but that was an awfully small perch, and there was no way that he *wouldn't* fall off if he had to stand there for more than a few minutes. He looked around looking for somewhere else to stand around waiting, hopefully somewhere a bit more comfortable than a window. He didn't see anything on the side of the apartment building, but there was a fire escape on the side of the building he was currently standing on, it didn't have a view directly into the window, but he could see a little into the kitchen if he stood in the right spot. He dropped down and waited.

After a few minutes he saw movement inside the apartment, and he could have sworn he heard yelling. Soon after, the window opened,

and Dabi looked around in confusion. Shouta waved at him to get his attention, which just seemed to cause even more confusion, especially when he made his way up to the windowsill, although he had to lean down a bit to fit in the frame.

“What the fuck is this? And *where the fuck is Wraith.*” Okay, that was aggressive, Shouta was starting to reconsider standing this close to the man who could burn him at a moment’s notice.

“They got sick, and they wouldn’t stay at home and rest unless I showed up here in their place.”

Dabi looked suspicious, but nodded “fine, but you’re staying right there.” Great, just wonderful, he was going to have to stand out here while having a conversation where neither person actually *wanted* to talk.

They stared at each other for a while “so, how was your day?” Shouta really needed to find a better conversation starter.

“Normal, how is the little gremlin?” Was that *concern* he was hearing? Shouta resisted the urge to smile, only seven meetings and Dabi was already attached, not that it was unexpected, his kid was amazing after all, and they had a knack for making people like them in the most unusual ways.

“They’re fine, it’s just a cold, they’ll be up and about in a few days, probably complaining about being benched until they’re properly recovered.” Just because they listened to him when he said to stay home didn’t mean that they were ever happy about it.

“So I’m stuck with *you* for today?” Was it just him or was Dabi nervous?

“Pretty much” Shouta looked into the apartment, it was exactly as Izuku had described it, like a hurricane had blown through, although if he looked carefully he saw piles of organized chaos like one would find in Higari’s lab. There was also something that had to be fairly new, a poster of the top five heroes that had been made last week, and this one had, a *truly excessive* amount of stab marks, he was going to guess that the knife embedded into Endeavor’s face had something to do with it. He was tempted to leave that alone, lest he become the next one stabbed, but the lack of aim was making a whole lot more sense when he noticed that Dabi’s hands were shaking.

“You know what, you’ve done your job, I’m alive, we talked, you can

leave" Dabi started to close the window but Shouta put his hand in the frame to stop him.

"Wait."

Dabi looked properly angry now. "*What. Do. You.* Want?" His voice cracked on the last word, Shouta sighed as he held the edge of the window. *This kid*, he wasn't a kid but he looked only a bit over nineteen and that basically counted, was trying so damn hard to act like nothing was wrong.

Dabi was fine, he was fine, he was *definitely fine*.

He absolutely hadn't run home after he saw an interview with some high ranking heroes being played on a random TV. Said interview being one where Endeavor talked some bullshit about how he strives to make the city safer, and then the fucker stated *bragging*. Normally, this wouldn't warrant a reaction, just a scoff and an eyeroll before Dabi would move on with his day, but today? Today Endeavor decided to start bragging about his son, and he managed to sound every bit the proud father that Dabi *knew* he wasn't. But hearing that, all this talk about how amazing the replacement was, how much potential he had, that he was destined for great things? It just served to rub salt in a wound that he thought had scarred over years ago.

It wasn't fair, the replacement was over there being talked about over and over again, and there was no word of Fuyumi or Natsuo anywhere, and back when Dabi was still Touya? He wasn't mentioned either, or if he was it was only as the failure. And after his death? How long did it take for the world to stop talking about him? A few months? A year? He knew it only took Endeavor two weeks to shut up about him. He didn't know how long it took his siblings, he didn't know how to find them.

By the time he got home he couldn't decide whether to scream or cry, unfortunately the second one wasn't an option anymore, so he spent, *a while*, throwing a kitchen knife at the poster he'd found a few days ago. He'd kept it just so that he could stab Endeavor in the face whenever he felt like it, which was becoming increasingly often these days.

He was prepared to deal with whatever questions Wraith threw at him today, they were predictable if not easy, not to mention a vigilante. He was not prepared for Eraserhead, who he had literally never talked to, and despite all that Wraith said about him, Dabi wouldn't trust him

further than he could throw him.

“Are you okay?” he was definitely imagining the way Eraserhead’s voice softened just a bit.

“Fuck off, I’m fine” Dabi did his best glare at Eraserhead, who seemed unimpressed.

“You’re not fooling anyone” he glared right back at Dabi “you’re literally shaking, are you okay?” His voice was calm and definitely softer than it was earlier.

“And why do *you* want to know?” There was no reason for a hero to be this concerned about a civilian, not unless there was something they could gain. Dabi tried to think of what, most heroes cared when there were cameras on them, but there weren’t any cameras here, some cared to lure people into a false sense of security, just so they could hurt them later. He wasn’t going to let his guard down, not today, he backed away from the window, keeping a wary eye on any sudden movements.

Eraserhead sighed, he started to try and step into the apartment but stopped when Dabi stepped back. He did *not* flinch. “Come on kid, I’m not going to hurt you” he raised his hands in a placating gesture.

Dabi let his flames run down his arms, *definitely* on purpose, he wasn’t panicking, he was being intimidating. “Likely story, I’m *fine*” his voice *didn’t* crack.

“No you’re not, but okay,” why the hell did Eraserhead have to sound so patient? Dabi hated it, he didn’t need a hero’s pity, he didn’t need to be treated like a child.

“Why are you still here?”

“Because, well” Eraserhead stumbled over his words, and Dabi grinned, finally, no more fake niceness, heroes always showed their true colours eventually. He mumbled something under his breath.

“What was that *hero*?”

“Because-” it looked like Eraserhead really didn’t want to admit it, Dabi moved closer to the window, ready to burn him when he stepped out of line.

“I’m worried.” Dabi felt his flames flicker with his surprise, *what?* Why

on earth was that so hard to admit, or was he playing mind games with Dabi?

“Why?” He wasn’t buying it, no way that this hero was being *genuine*, “because your precious vigilante would get mad at you if you weren’t?”

“No, well, they would be concerned about you too, but you’re not even twenty, the world shouldn’t have hurt you this much.” Eraserhead took off his goggles and looked directly at Dabi, he actually looked concerned, either he was an amazing actor, or he was being genuine, and that was somehow much scarier.

Dabi was silent for a while, then he pulled back his fire, feeling the usual dull pain that seeped through any part of him that wasn’t burnt. “Just leave, I’ll be fine” he said, failing to make that sound aggressive in any way.

Eraserhead nodded “alright, just, if you ever need help, me and Wraith are right here.” Then he leapt back over to the fire escape on the other building, scaling the wall and disappearing over the rooftop.

Dabi stared out of the window for a while longer, someone was willing to help him, two people in fact, were willing to catch him if he fell.

What a terrifying thought.

Chapter End Notes

> Oh look, I'm giving the guy with daddy issues a father figure, now if only he would accept it.

Chapter 39: A burning heart.

Chapter Summary

Dabi gets into yet another situation. And this time he can't get out on his own.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The universe was playing a prank, a very cruel prank. Dabi could practically hear the mocking laughter surrounding him as he stood there, completely and utterly frozen, watching the fighting rage above his head. It wasn't particularly exciting, he didn't recognize the hero, must be a new one, the villains weren't anything special either, just some two-bit idiots who thought they were the next great threat, it was where he *wasn't* looking that had him staring up.

It was the *fire*.

The swirling mass of reds and oranges and specks of yellow that made up the roaring inferno, ravenous embers flying off and catching on anything even remotely flammable as it swept across the roof. He could feel it creeping its way towards him, the smoke getting thicker and thicker as he stared up at the fight.

The hero had managed to take down one of the villains, it was only a matter of time until the other two went down as well. Maybe then someone would notice the person on the roof, but maybe then it would be too late. He could barely hear anything over the crackling of the flames, but sirens were made to be heard, he wondered if they had finished evacuating everyone by now. He could see flickers in his peripheral vision, light and shadow twisting in his mind to form a monster of burning teeth and a crackling roar. He was forced to look down as coughs wracked through his body, a combined effect of the smoke clouding his vision and the cigarette that lay half burnt and forgotten at his feet. The fire was so close, he could reach out and touch it, it was *too close*. Against all reason Dabi stumbled backwards, towards where he knew the rooftop access was being eaten away by the flames. Maybe if he ran fast enough, he could get to the staircase

before it burned away, if he could just get to his apartment, he could probably get to the fire escape.

That was an entirely stupid course of action, the building was barely kept up to code, and the fire escape would crumble under him if he tried to use it, but fear has never made anyone rational. He ignored the pain as he shoved and kicked at the burning door, forcing it open and almost falling down the stairs in his panic. He tried to grab the railing but missed, sending him tumbling until he hit the wall. He heard the crack before he registered the pain, a sickening sound of snapping bone that he was all too familiar with. He couldn't tell what had broken, his entire body felt like it was being eaten alive and the pain blended together. Not that it mattered, he had to get out of here, he forced himself to stand, leaning heavily against the wall, he tried to make his way down the steps but the slightest movement sent waves of pain through every fibre of his being. He had to keep moving, the fire was stalking its way down the steps to devour him, taking its sweet time like it knew he couldn't run.

The feeling of burning alive from the inside was one he had gotten used to over the years, but *this?* Having the fire licking at his clothes and clawing at his skin was a feeling he had hoped never to feel again. The pain engulfed his body as he felt his legs give out from under him, a scream tore through the air as he landed awkwardly. His vision swam with darkness as he fought to keep his eyes open.

The smoke shifted, forming the towering trunks of trees, the uneven concrete under him almost felt like rocks digging into his back, was it just him or did the whole world seem so much larger? A strand of hair as white as the snow melting around him fell across his face as the sound of burning wood filled his ears. The birds had stopped chirping ages ago and he wasn't sure if he could get to the river in time. But nobody was coming to save him, least of all his father, who still hadn't shown up to see him and the new flames he was so proud of.

He tried to push himself up, in one last ditch attempt, but his arm bent weird and the sheer pain that shot through him caused him to fall back down, staring at the burning canopy. The fire licking at lightly scarred skin, bandages going up in flames, searing marks into his skin wherever they touched.

For the second time in his life, Touya burned.

Anan would blame the fact that they hadn't recognized the address on the exhaustion. They had barely been able to rest since getting called

out to a landslide that nearly buried an entire town, it had taken them and the Wild Wild Pussycats two whole days to clear the area and find survivors, and then came the worst part, retrieving the bodies. Anan never liked that part of their job, although they had gotten used to it over time, something about those lifeless eyes filled them with sorrow and a thousand 'what ifs' of how they could have been saved. They sighed, recognizing that they were overthinking things, and sent a quick text to Ryo asking if they could talk later, he would know exactly what they meant, it was how they had met after all.

When they finally got back into Musutafu they made a quick detour to Nemuri's favourite bakery to grab those mini cherry tarts they both adored. They'd spent three days doing rescue work and the travel time added another day on top of that, they hadn't been able to sleep more than three hours a night that entire time. All they wanted to do now was go home, toss their backpack into a corner and watch a documentary with their wife before sleeping the day away. Nemuri would have been keeping up with the news reports of the landslide, just in case things went wrong, even though the HPSC would send her a report if anything happened to Anan. It was a habit they'd noticed with the rest of their family too, whenever someone had to leave for a longer mission they'd all keep tabs on it as best they could.

On the way home they saw someone running down the street yelling for help, a kid, maybe six or seven, with singed clothes. Anan might have been tired, but that disappeared the second they realised a civilian was in danger, all their training kicking in as they stopped the kid and asked what happened. She introduced herself as Asano Haru and said that the building where she and her dad lived was on fire, she continued trying to explain but Anan was already moving, asking her for the address as they sent out an alert from their phone.

The building was clearly old and not in the best shape, Anan could name at least five safety violations from the outside alone. A few people had already evacuated but it seemed that Asano's father wasn't one of them as she was being held back from running into the building by someone who kept reassuring her with empty promises. Anan knew they couldn't do much, they were in civilian clothes and completely unprotected compared to their hero costume which was resistant to just about every common hazard they could think of, but they did their best to keep people calm and figure out what happened until the fire fighters arrived. It turned out that a hero-villain fight had made its way over the apartment building and a stray energy blast had hit the gas pipe that ran through the building, that should have been impossible if the pipe was up to the safety code, which meant

that they probably wouldn't be able to trust the fire escapes to be up to code either.

The sound of sirens was a truly welcome racket, firefighters running into the building to get any remaining survivors and others running the hoses anywhere that the fire was strong. Anan stepped back to let them do their jobs and focused on making sure nobody was hurt or in shock, they did have to calm down a few children whose guardians hadn't been found yet. Thankfully it seemed that there were very few casualties, they didn't know if they could deal with more dead bodies and more grieving families without crying.

An older gentleman seemed rather worried and kept searching for someone in the small crowd, Anan walked over to reassure him that the firefighters would do their best to recover whatever friend or family member he was looking for.

"Sir? Are you looking for someone?" It was always better to start politely, especially with the elderly.

The old man frowned worriedly "my neighbour, a nice young man, helps me with errands sometimes."

"I'm sure they'll find him soon, do you know where in the building he was when the fire broke out?"

"I'm sorry miss" they grimaced but didn't correct him "I only know he wasn't in his apartment, it sounded like he was going up to the roof?"

Well that wasn't good, the roof would be the last place the firefighters reached, not to mention it was the worst place to get stuck once fight or flight kicked in. The old man continued "I'm just worried the kid might try to fight the firefighters, he never trusted emergency services, or hospitals" he sounded increasingly worried, and Anan felt dread building in their gut.

They couldn't leave this to the fire department, not if this person was going to refuse help, and not if he didn't trust hospitals. Anan had never personally had a bad experience with hospitals, but they knew that some of their family had, the ones with 'villainous' quirks, and they'd seen the destructive panic attacks that Sekijiro and Shouta fell into whenever they wake up in the infirmary.

They dropped their backpack and ran into the building, apologizing as they elbowed the firefighter who tried to stop them. Instantly they were surrounded by smoke, but the fires had mostly been put out on

this floor. Anan took off their cardigan and tied it around their nose and mouth to keep the smoke out, silently thankful that they hadn't worn anything flowy that could get caught on things.

Most of the floors were empty of civilians, which meant that the firefighters had cleared out everyone and were now working on putting out the fires. It seemed that the firefighter guarding the door had alerted his colleagues about Anan, which was making their work about ten times harder as they had to avoid the two or three firefighters who had been assigned to look for them.

They were starting to feel the heat of the fires as they climbed further up where the fires hadn't been extinguished yet, and their eyes were watering as the smoke grew thicker, even their cardigan wasn't enough to keep out all of it. But they were almost to the roof, just one more flight of stairs and...

There was someone laying on the ground, Anan took one look at the stapled together scars and recognized Dabi, the kid that Izuku and Shouta had been keeping tabs on for over half a year. He seemed unconscious and a quick check revealed that he was definitely alive, although his arm was broken and he had a few scrapes here and there, Anan breathed a sigh of relief, they wouldn't be dragging out the poor kid's corpse after all. They pulled him into their arms, careful not to jostle the broken bones, and noted with some alarm that he was lighter than he should have been, but they could worry about that when they weren't in a burning building.

They carefully made their way down to the lower floors, working through the slight light-headedness from breathing in the smoke, Chiyo was going to kill them if they got heat stroke. The firefighters quickly assisted them in carrying Dabi outside, where they were promptly lectured on safety and how civilians shouldn't get involved. They could have shown their hero license, but it was buried in their backpack underneath the bag of tarts and they really didn't want to dig it out so they just smiled and nodded along to the firefighter's scolding. They grabbed their backpack from where they'd thrown it and fished out their phone which was thankfully unharmed, they took a few deep breaths as they called Nemuri, trying to calm themself down.

"Hi honey! Are you almost home? I missed you so much~" Anan almost started crying right then, they hadn't heard Nemuri's voice in days and, now that they weren't in an active rescue, the exhaustion had come back in full force.

“No, I, one second,” They double checked their location before sending the coordinates to Nemuri “can you come here?”.

“What? Anan? Sweetie? *Are you okay?*” They felt bad for making Nemuri worry, but their attention was divided between the call, the burning apartment and Dabi who had been put on a stretcher further away from the building, Anan hoped he hadn’t inhaled too much smoke.

“I’m fine Nemuri, there was a situation I had to help with, just, come pick me up” they didn’t bother hiding the tiredness in their voice.

“Alright, I’ll be there in half an hour” Anan heard the faint sounds of a car starting as the call ended.

Dabi woke up to searing pain all over his body, his eyes snapped open as he looked around him, the forest was gone, he was in the city, laying on his back and staring up at a sunny sky. What happened?

The fire.

Panic gripped him as he tried to sit up, ignoring the pain that shot through his arm when he tried to move it, someone came over and tried to hold him down. That sent alarm bells ringing in his mind as he swung a flaming hand at the head of the stranger. That seemed to cause them some pain but nothing burned, when he looked closer he saw that the person was wearing a firefighter’s uniform, so someone managed to find him in time.

He was still being held down, but unfortunately the firefighter was physically stronger than him so he settled for spitting curses in her face, which seemed to attract the attention of someone else who wandered over. A person who looked as if they had been caught up in the fire as well, he figured they must have been visiting someone, their clothes were nicer than anything the people living here owned, and he certainly would have recognized someone with dual toned hair, rare as it was.

“Hey Dabi!” He blinked at them, how did they know his name? He sure as hell didn’t know them.

“Excuse me?” He asked, slightly annoyed and wondering exactly were this was going.

Instead of answering him the person turned to the firefighter “sorry about that he’s just flighty” Dabi glared at them, who the fuck was

this, and why were they pretending to know him?

The firefighter shrugged “it’s surprisingly normal for people to get disoriented in situations like these, no need to apologize for your friend.” She momentarily turned her head to gesture to the rest of the survivors.

Dabi opened his mouth to correct the firefighter on her choice of words, but the stranger shushed him “play along.” He looked at them for an explanation but the firefighter turned back and continued talking.

“Anyways, we’re going to be taking your friend to the closest hospital, so that would be” the firefighter thought for a moment, “Musutafu General” not the worst place to go, but certainly one he’d still like to avoid.

“Hey, *no*, no hospitals” he said, trying to sound intimidating, which was rather difficult when laying down.

“Sorry, but we need to make sure you’re cleared of smoke inhalation, plus you have a broken arm.”

Dabi was about to throw an insult at this lady when the stranger stepped in “hey, can I talk to my friend for a bit?” He was about to correct them but the firefighter just nodded and took a few steps away.

The stranger whispered “hey, what’s your problem with hospitals anyways?”

“Why should I tell you?”

The stranger shrugged “you don’t have to, just that I know that some people don’t like hospitals because they don’t trust doctors, that or they don’t want any records of their existence.”

Dabi stared at the stranger, “and what if those were the reasons?”

The stranger shrugged, “well, I can’t exactly *fix* the problem, but I can tell you that with this many patients, especially from this area of the city, most of those doctors are going to be too busy to care about a fake name.”

Dabi tried not to show how relived he was, all of the records he had since running away were listed and filed under his new name,

although those would be hard to find, the one doctor he went to wasn't exactly *legal* it was a 'don't ask me and I won't ask you' kind of deal, “why exactly are you trying to reassure me?”

The stranger smiled “let's just say we have a mutual friend,” they winked at him.

Dabi sighed, he should have known, “let me guess, this friend is a tiny green gremlin?”

“Yep! I'd say it's nice to meet you but this isn't the first time we've met.”

Dabi raised an eyebrow at that “I think I'd remember if I'd met you before.”

“Well, I'm in casual right now, last time we met I was dressed for work, and some people tell me I look like a marshmallow, so I'm not surprised you forgot.” A hero then, Dabi thought for a second before remembering the last time he got caught in a large fire. *The Space Hero: Thirteen.* Well, at least he knew why they were trying to help him, not that he trusted them, but if they were friends with Wraith that gave them a bit of leeway.

Suddenly Thirteen's phone started ringing “oh shoot, my wife's here, I have to go or she'll be worried, good luck!” they adjusted their backpack and jogged away.

It seemed that he was doomed to go to the hospital no matter what he did, he just hoped he could get out again without too much questioning, either from the doctors, or from the visitor who'd inevitably show up.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the cliffhanger but this was getting too long.

Chapter 40: Tiredness, Tears and Trust

Chapter Summary

Dabi gets some visitors at the hospital.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The soft humming of the florescent lights was deceptively soothing, Dabi had to focus to keep his eyes open. He had been running on adrenaline as soon as the fire started, and the exhaustion had crept up now that he was in less immediate danger. There were only so many times he could find nonsense patterns in the ceiling tiles before it no longer kept his mind occupied, and he felt his consciousness slipping away. He shook his head, relishing in the pain that flared up whenever he moved, if that was what it took for him to stay awake and alert then he would gladly suffer through it.

He sighed, this was futile, he would fall asleep if he kept laying down. Shifting around in the hospital bed he tried to figure out how to sit up with one arm, he managed it after an embarrassing number of tries. Now what? He looked around for something to keep his attention, anything to make sure he didn't lower his guard, not while he was trapped here. His eyes wandered over to the cast covering his arm, the material was itchy and uncomfortable, at least it wasn't as bad as when the doctors first wrapped his arm. The pain was awful, but he would rather endure that, the only thing really keeping him awake, than take the painkillers the nurse had left on the table.

They said he'd have to stay for a few days, the doctor had said he was medically fine, paused, eyed his scars, and then clarified that she meant he was stable. Still, they'd be keeping him there until they were sure his lungs weren't damaged from the amount of smoke he'd breathed in while he was panicking. His only thought however had been trying to figure out what the hell he was going to do after they released him, that apartment was the only place in the area that would let him rent with a fake name and shady past. He'd probably have to move to another city to find a place that wouldn't ask too many questions, it would be a pain in the ass but it was his best option.

So why did the idea of leaving this city behind feel like a horrible idea? Why did it fill him with sadness just thinking about it? He hated it, hated having a feeling that he couldn't explain and hated that the reason felt like it was on the tip of his tongue.

There was a knocking on the door, unnecessary since there was nothing stopping the nurse from opening the door, but he supposed it was a courtesy. The nurse smiled when she saw him still awake, Dabi had worked enough shitty retail jobs to know a fake smile when he saw it.

"Your family is here to see you."

He must have done a good job of hiding the panic that washed over him because the nurse's plastic smile didn't change. His family? Surely nobody had recognized him, he would have heard something if that was the case. But what if someone *did* figure it out? What if they had contacted his siblings, or worse, *his father*. "Really?" He asked sceptically, because not believing her was the only way he could stay calm.

She nodded, smile still plastered on her face, and continued talking, oblivious to the fact that he was calculating the chance of being able to fight his way out of here with a broken arm. "Yes, your uncle and cousin?"

What? Dabi blinked in confusion, he didn't have any extended family, Endeavor was an only child and his mother's side of the family was estranged before he was even born. The nurse was too busy talking to notice a little kid poked their head into the room, now he was even more confused, nobody in his family had green hair, and certainly none that was fluffy enough to look like an unruly pom-pom. And was it just him or had he seen this kid somewhere before?

The kid must have noticed his staring because they waved at him "hey Dabi, it's me! Your friendly ghost!" they signed, before ducking out of sight before the nurse could see them.

Of course.

He really should have seen this coming, of course Thirteen would have told Wraith what happened. Wait, did this mean Wraith was a literal child? They didn't even look like a teenager yet! Who was letting this kid run around being a vigilante? Although that explained a lot about their behaviour, and still made no sense at all. Wraith was smarter than some adults, they literally talked circles around him the

last time he'd tried to argue with them, and they're a kid? He didn't know whether to be impressed or annoyed.

He sighed as the nurse left and Wraith walked into the room, followed by a man who he had to assume was Eraserhead. Wraith, with their usual lack of boundaries, sat on the edge of the bed, Eraser leaned on the wall as far away as possible in the cramped room.

"Hey, we heard about the fire, are you doing alright?" Wraith's expression was much easier to read when it wasn't hidden behind a mask, and right now they looked so concerned that it hurt.

Eraser just sighed "kid, shouldn't we introduce ourselves? After all he can't use our codenames while we're out of uniform" he looked over to Dabi "I'm Aizawa Shouta and this is Izuku."

"It's nice to meet you, I guess, don't you have better things to be doing right now?."

Aizawa shook his head "one, it's the weekend, and two, we don't have patrol tonight, so we can stay as long as we need to." Dabi wanted to be annoyed at that, dealing with these two for longer than an hour would be a pain, but for some reason he wasn't that upset about it.

"Oh, by the way, I hope you don't mind, we had to pretend to be family to get the nurse to let us visit you" Izuku explained.

"Yeah, I figured, although you nearly gave me a damn heart attack, I thought my *actual* family had found me." He still didn't know how this kid had gotten him to open up about his family, at least, as much as he could without revealing his identity to them.

Aizawa winced when he realised what Dabi meant, Izuku just looked horrified "*oh no,* I'm sorry, we didn't mean to scare you."

"It's fine, speaking of families, do yours know you're here?" He asked, because honestly, where were this kid's parents?

"Well duh, I mean, dad is standing right there, and papa is at work, but he knows." Well, that explained a few things, Dabi glared a bit at Aizawa.

"What?"

"How old are they? Nine, ten? And you're letting them fight crime?" Dabi knew what happened to legacy kids, hell, what happened to him

was a shining example of why this was a bad idea.

“I’m eleven actually, and I was a vigilante *before* I got adopted.” Izuku huffed and crossed their arms in a pout.

Aizawa sighed “trust me, it was either this or dealing with them sneaking out every night.”

“You still didn’t try to talk them out of it?”

“Have you tried to talk them out of *anything*?” Fair point, they were impossible to argue with once they’d set their mind on something.

“Hey, Dabi?” Izuku asked, they were looking between him and Aizawa like they weren’t sure what to do “are you okay?”.

“I mean I almost died and I have a broken arm, but yeah, mostly, why?” Dabi wasn’t sure if he said something wrong but Izuku definitely had tears in their eyes “uh, Izuku?”

“Can I hug you?” They must have seen his hesitation because they backed away.

“Wait,” Dabi reached out with his uninjured arm and gave them a pat on the head “I’m fine, okay?” Izuku nodded, still looking unconvinced.

Aizawa smiled at the two of them, a soft and unguarded smile Dabi had never seen on the hero before, even during the few times they had talked, a smile that was quickly hidden when Aizawa realised he had seen it. Dabi barely supressed a grin of his own, he wanted to laugh and tease Aizawa for being such a softy, but a part of him was delighted at the fact that a smile as kind as that had been directed, at least in part, to him.

“What happened anyways?” Aizawa asked “Anan only said your apartment caught on fire, we didn’t get that many details.”

Dabi shrugged, as much as he could shrug with one arm that is, “remember how I told you I don’t do well with fire? I freaked out, managed to fall down a flight of stairs, broke my arm and passed out, not much more to say.” There were a few more things, but they didn’t need to know that he had hallucinated being a kid again. “I wasn’t hurt too badly, I’ll be out in a few days,” and then he’d have to move, a thought that wouldn’t have bothered him normally, but why did the idea feel like it was twisting his insides?

His expression must have changed because Izuku frowned “is, something wrong?” Dabi wanted to smile and say no, nothing was wrong, after all, there was no reason for him to feel this unhappy, it wasn’t the first time he had to move, it wouldn’t be the last. Aizawa hadn’t said anything, but he stared at Dabi with an expression that meant he wasn’t going to be fooled by any half-hearted platitudes. Dabi had gotten good at reading both of them, even though they only visited him once a month, or just waved hello whenever he saw them on patrol, he had gotten used to them and...

Oh.

“I’m going to miss you guys” because despite every attempt to keep his distance and not get attached, these two had managed to get through the cracks in his walls and worm their way into his icy heart.

He *cared* about them, they cared about *him*. And, horrifyingly, Dabi couldn’t bring himself to be angry about it, not at them, and not at himself.

“Miss us? Why?” Oh no, Izuku looked like they were about to cry, again.

“The apartment is a wreck, I can’t stay there anymore, I’ll have to leave the city” his voice cracked and he knew that his eyes would be watering right about now if they still could.

Izuku’s face fell, they were clearly trying to hold back tears, he wasn’t much better, he was sure he had started shaking. This was so stupid, there was nothing they could do about any of this, it felt so unfair that the universe would give him two people to care about only to force him to leave them.

He didn’t notice when Aizawa had walked to the edge of the bed, but he was there, one arm wrapped around a crying Izuku. And he was looking directly at Dabi with such worry and kindness that just made it harder to hold back the sobs that had built up in the back of his throat. “It’s okay kids, I’m right here.”

Dabi just started sobbing, eyes hurting from unshed tears. It took several minutes for him to calm down, and Izuku was half asleep by then.

“I don’t want to be alone again.” Dabi’s voice was barely a whisper and hoarse from the crying, but it seemed, in that moment like it was the loudest, and most crushing sound in the room. Because it was the

truth, the *one* truth he had tried to run away from ever since that day, he was never made for being alone, no matter how hard he tried.

“I know kid, I know,” the sound of Aizawa’s voice was the only thing keeping him from breaking down again.

“I don’t know what to do, I can’t leave, *I just can’t.*”

Aizawa smiled at him “don’t worry kid, we’ll figure something out, trust me, okay?”

Dabi nodded, he did trust Aizawa, and Izuku, more than he would have ever admitted to himself if circumstances hadn’t forced him to. And while he was sure a part of him would always be waiting for the other shoe to drop, he ignored it for now, because doing anything other than clinging to this thread of hope would send him spiralling again.

A yawn escaped Dabi’s mouth before he could stop it, damn it, he was already tired, all that crying just made it worse. He couldn’t just fall asleep! Who knows what could happen while he was unconscious?

Aizawa must have seen the panic on his face because he just sighed, “get some rest kid, I’ll wake you up if anything happens, okay?”

“Promise?”

“I promise.”

Chapter End Notes

Finally, the burnt boi accepts his fate.

Chapter 41: What is a family?

Chapter Summary

Dabi thinks about his family.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It took three long days before Dabi was let out of the hospital, Izuku and Aizawa had stayed with him the entire first day, but they had to leave after that, of course they did, they both had duties to attend to. But before they left the three of them talked about where Dabi was going to stay, the main issue was that no apartment nearby was going to let him rent with a past as shady as his, this was surprisingly easy to solve now that there was someone else helping him. All they'd have to do was put Aizawa's name on the lease and say that Dabi was a friend or relative who was staying at the apartment. That would take a day or two to get done, and Dabi was just prepared to camp out in an alleyway or two, but Izuku had very firmly insisted that he could stay with them, he wasn't too keen on intruding into their home like that, but it *was* the better option and it wouldn't be for long.

When the idea had been suggested Aizawa had looked rather uncomfortable about the matter, Dabi was convinced he didn't agree with the idea and was prepared to turn down Izuku's offer, even though it was his only real option. But then it turned out Aizawa was just worried about Dabi being stressed out because apparently his 'over-emotional cockatoo of a husband' would try to befriend him as soon as he saw him. Dabi shrugged and said he'd be fine, which was mostly the truth, and internally he hoped Aizawa's husband wouldn't be *that* pushy, he was married to Aizawa after all, and Dabi was pretty sure that nobody could get in that man's personal space if he didn't want them there.

He had just said goodbye to the nurse with the plastic smile when his phone started ringing, he checked the contact's name, it was Aizawa, right, Dabi had called him in the morning to let him know that he was finally free and what time he was going to be released. It had been Aizawa's insistence that Dabi had his number, just in case something happened, he wasn't sure if it was completely necessary, he could

probably get out of most situations on his own, fires being the one exception. But looking at his, incredibly short, contacts list and seeing Aizawa's name right there, it felt like a lifeline, even if he wasn't going to use it as anything other than a last resort if he *did* get in trouble.

"Hey, they finally let me out," Dabi carefully balanced the phone between his shoulder and ear, leaving his hand free to open the door. The cast was still itchy and annoying, and he hated it, one of the doctors here *did* have a healing quirk, but it wasn't enough to completely heal a compound fracture. Still, it was nice to know that he'd only have to wear the cast for a month and a half instead of the four months it would have been otherwise, he was sure he would have gone crazy if he couldn't move his arm for that long.

"That's good, I was going to come find you, but if you're already out, I'm in the parking lot." Dabi hurried outside, looked around and finally spotted Aizawa standing around, and he had to do a double take just to make sure he wasn't hallucinating.

"Uhh, are you wearing, bright pink sweatpants?" Dabi asked, barely holding back laughter.

Aizawa sighed loudly enough that he heard it from both the call and across the lot "yes, that's me, now hurry up," and he ended the call.

Dabi tried not to stare as he walked over, honestly, that was one of the *least* inconspicuous items of clothing he'd ever seen, and he'd had to suffer through witnessing those neon dresses Fuyumi used to like. He politely waited until after they'd both gotten into the car before asking, "did your wardrobe get mixed up with someone else's?" Because there was no way Aizawa wore those willingly, right?

"No, these are mine, you'd be surprised at how effective it is at getting people to not recognize me" Dabi nodded, honestly if he didn't know where Aizawa was he might have thought that it was just someone who looked a lot like him.

"You're worried about being recognized?" Dabi asked as he couldn't think of any reason, after all the last time Aizawa had visited he was dressed pretty normally.

"A co-worker of mine is here for, reasons, and I *really* don't want her to see me here."

"She can't be *that bad, right?"*

“Oh, no she’s fine, we’re kind of friends, at least friendly enough to have a running joke between us, I just didn’t want to sit through an hour of pun infused conversation while I waited for you.” Aizawa shuddered and Dabi couldn’t help but agree, that sounded like torture.

There were a few worn out stickers that had been stuck to the roof of the car, there was a dinosaur, a cat and the last one was the biggest, it looked bright yellow with faded letters that he couldn’t quite make out “what’s with the stickers?”

Aizawa laughed softly “my husband put those there a few years ago, I couldn’t remove them, so they’re just, there now.”

“Your husband is starting to sound like a very interesting man, who is he anyways? Another hero, right?”

“Present Mic.”

Dabi rolled his eyes, he was expecting a serious answer damn it, he knew Aizawa’s default was sarcasm, a trait they shared in common, but this was just laughable, he couldn’t have made it more obvious that he was joking.

The car ride was mostly silence after that, neither of them really liked talking, Dabi just watched the scenery pass. Eventually he found that he could pass the time by trying to spot all of the random cat hairs that had found their way into random nooks and crannies, although he really only found long brown ones. Izuku had mentioned a black cat as well, but her hairs were a bit harder to find seeing as the interior of the car was mostly black.

They got to the apartment building and Dabi noted that some of the other residents of the building were looking at him with confusion and fear as they passed by. Some of them were whispering, a reaction he had come to expect from people, but they were quickly silenced by Aizawa glaring at them, it was weirdly nice to have people not talking about him where he could hear their speculations about how he got his burns.

The apartment itself was on one of the higher floors, and Dabi found himself slightly out of breath by the time they climbed the last flight of stairs, if he had known it would be this high up, he would have asked if they could take the elevator. Aizawa opened the door only to be pounced on by a very small cat with eyes that looked a just a bit too big for her head, the cat then took one sniff of the air, looked directly at Dabi and darted back into the apartment. So that was the

shy one, Dabi was more wary of the other one, the one that Izuku had described as a bit grumpy and maybe a little unfriendly to strangers, Aizawa had just smiled and called her a grudge holding bastard.

“Moonlight!” a slightly-too-loud voice called from the other end of the room, and before Dabi could blink, Aizawa was trapped in a hug by a blonde man who seemed to have far more energy than a normal human should ever posses. The man, who he assumed to be Aizawa’s husband, turned to him “and you must be Dabi” he held out his hand but didn’t seem offended when Dabi ignored it, “I’m Yamada Hizashi, but you might know me better as Present Mic!”

Dabi blinked a few times to make sure he heard that right, then he turned to Aizawa “you were serious?”

Aizawa looked confused “did you think I was joking?”

“Yeah, I mean he’s *Present Mic,* he’s kind of known for being,” Dabi floundered for a sentence that wouldn’t sound like he was insulting Yamada “you know...”

“You can just say loud, obnoxious and annoyingly friendly, I don’t mind” Yamada laughed “and I get it, I don’t really seem like the type of guy Shouta would marry.”

Dabi smiled awkwardly, but it seemed that neither of them had been offended by his mistake, in fact Yamada started teasing Aizawa about it who responded in kind, Dabi would have been concerned about it being a fight if both of them didn’t have growing smiles on their faces. He shuffled away as the couple continued their verbal play-fight, suddenly feeling like an intruder in a space that was definitely *not* where he was allowed.

Izuku had just been sitting at the table this entire time, reading a book and occasionally looking up to see what was going on, they waved him over. He sat down on the other end of the table “are your parents always like that?” He asked, watching as Aizawa said something that made Yamada melodramatically monologue only to be interrupted as he bumped into, and then fell onto, the couch, causing Aizawa to start giggling uncontrollably as he helped his husband up. Was this how people were supposed to act with their spouses? He thought back to his parents, they had never laughed like this, not together, playful teasing replaced with sharp arguments, had he ever even heard them call each other by anything other than their names? He had known his parents’ marriage was a loveless one, but seeing Izuku’s parents

together, it felt like comparing a bonfire to a coal thrown into the river.

Izuku must have been talking about something while he was distracted because they suddenly pulled out a notebook, opened it and handed it to him, where had that even come from? Dabi read the writing on the front that labelled it as **'Analysis #10'**. Oh, these were the notebooks he'd heard so much about, he looked to the page Izuku had turned to, it was him, a full analysis of his quirk in thorough detail, it got a few things off. There was a note about how his scars were likely due to the fact that he didn't have the fire-resistance mutation, and while that was technically correct, his burns were actually worse than if he had a normal body because he had the ice-resistance mutation from his mother. He flipped the page to find another random hero, Izuku started explaining this one in further detail, it reminded him of the way Natsuo used to talk on and on about whatever new show had caught his eye. Dabi might not have been the best brother, but he was good enough to sit and listen even though he barely had any idea what Natsuo was talking about, because he never had anyone else who would listen. So he did his best to pay attention to Izuku's ever confusing ramblings while the time flew by.

On nights when they didn't have patrol, Shouta was always the last to go to sleep, Hizashi would go to bed at nine, Izuku would go to their room around the same time followed dutifully by Shadow and sometimes Mop, although he was sure they didn't actually fall asleep until much later. Which left Shouta to deal with his insomnia by trying to get some work done, going over cases, grading papers, or other such things to keep his mind and hands busy until he was finally tired enough to flop into bed and cuddle with Hizashi.

Tonight it seemed that he wasn't the only one awake at, he checked the time, ten-thirty. Dabi was sitting on the couch, the pillow and blanket that Hizashi gave him were still untouched, he seemed to be muttering something under his breath, but Shouta wasn't really paying attention. He would have just chalked it up to being in an unfamiliar place, until Dabi sighed frustratedly and started pacing around the room still muttering to himself.

"Is something wrong?" Shouta asked, not really looking up from his students' essays.

Dabi looked at him like he hadn't realised Shouta had been here the entire time, "nothing, just, thinking."

Shouta hummed as he marked some more lines in red, “about anything in particular?”

“My parents, I guess,” Dabi started tapping his fingers to the cast on his arm, he was nervous.

Shouta smiled sadly, “something made you think of them?”

“Not really, I was mostly thinking of how much better you and Yamada are to Izuku, and-” Dabi cut himself off.

“And?” Shouta put the essays down, he could grade those later, he had a distressed kid to deal with.

“And, I was just, wondering if things would have turned out different if I had a family like you, if, maybe I could have been a normal kid.”

“Do you mean, you wouldn’t have run away?”

“Yeah, I, don’t really care about my parents, but I wish I could have seen my siblings grow up.” Dabi stopped pacing and flopped back on the couch, a faraway look in his eyes, “if I had a family like yours, maybe I wouldn’t have given up.”

“Given up? On what?”

“On everything, on being happy, on having friends, on being anything more than a failure.”

Taking a breath, Shouta moved to the couch, keeping some space between him and Dabi, he hated that he couldn’t do anything to help, he didn’t know who Dabi’s family was so he couldn’t take Dabi and his siblings away from their parents. If he ever found out though he was going to punch their father in the face, if Hizashi or Izuku didn’t get there first. “You’re not a failure, kid, *Dabi,* look at me” Dabi blinked, focusing on Shouta for the first time in the conversation, *“you’re **not** a failure.”*

Dabi opened his mouth to argue but Shouta cut him off “whoever told you that was wrong, even if it was yourself, you didn’t fail by being born with a quirk that hurts you, you didn’t fail because you couldn’t stop your siblings from getting hurt, and you didn’t fail by running away, you were a child with no-one to turn to, you did the best you could, you never failed.”

“You wouldn’t be saying that if you knew who my father is,” Dabi

laughed bitterly.

“I don’t need to know, hell, your father could be All-Might himself and it wouldn’t change a single thing, no-one deserves to be hurt the way you were, and no child deserves to be held to the expectations of their parents.”

Dabi looked completely lost, like he hadn’t ever thought of things that way. Shouta supposed he probably didn’t, he might have hated his father, but still, shaking off years of parental influence like that was never easy. “I guess you’re right” he finally said, leaning back to stare at the ceiling “I wish I could have a family like yours, you’re all so, *good* to each other.”

“You’re always welcome to be a part of our family, if you want, I know Izuku and Hizashi would agree with me.”

Dabi looked at him disbelievingly, “really?”

“If I wasn’t serious I wouldn’t have offered.”

Dabi looked up at the ceiling again, thinking, then, he took a deep breath, “I don’t know, I mean, aren’t I too old to be adopted?”

Shouta smiled at him, “you don’t have to be legally related to be considered family, trust me, that’s basically how our family works anyways.” Dabi was still staring at the ceiling, not saying a word, “I’ll let you think about it” Shouta said, getting up to finish his grading his students’ atrocious essays.

A few minutes later Dabi spoke up from where he lay on the couch, eyes closed as he was half asleep, “I think,” he took a deep breath as he considered his words “I think I would like to have you as my family” he said, voice soft from sleepiness.

Shouta hummed in acknowledgment as he finished marking off another essay, there were quite a few more to get done, but he was finally tired, so he put the rest away and stood up to go to bed.

“G‘night ‘zawa” Dabi said, sleep slurring his words.

Shouta smiled, “good night kid.”

Chapter End Notes

quietly chanting Dadzawa, *Dadzawa,* ***Dadzawa***

Chapter 42: Cooking is surprisingly therapeutic.

Chapter Summary

Hizashi bonds with his new son

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue
Signed and Spoken Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hizashi woke up to the sunlight shining through the bedroom window, he checked the time, it was about ten minutes before his alarm, well, no point in going back to sleep now. He tried to sit up only to be pulled back by the arm wrapped around his waist. He sighed and poked at Shouta, which accomplished nothing as he just continued nuzzling his face into Hizashi's chest. Okay, time for plan b, Hizashi smiled, plan b was fun, he started humming a random tune, except without his hearing aids he couldn't tell if he was on key or not. Shouta glared at him but since he didn't let go, Hizashi just kept humming what he hoped was a horribly off-tune melody. Shouta put a hand over his mouth to stop him, and then pulled it back almost immediately.

"Did you just lick my hand!?" Hizashi just grinned and kept humming, Shouta looked completely exasperated "come on, stop that".

"You know how to get me to stop." Hizashi looked over at the case with his hearing aids, which he could reach, if he wasn't being held in place.

Shouta reluctantly let go of Hizashi, great, now he was pouting at him. Hizashi just shook his head, Shouta would wake up in a few minutes anyway, he was just being stubborn.

"Shouta, sweetie, we have work in two hours" he wasn't normally *this* tired unless patrol was *particularly* tough, or after Nemuri or Hirohito managed to convince him to be social for once.

Shouta grumbled something unintelligible and buried his face in the pillows. Adorable, Hizashi smiled like an absolute dork, before realizing that he couldn't stand there staring at his cute husband, he had to get him out of bed.

"Alright, what's going on?" He dragged Shouta away from the bed, which was not made easier by him just going limp like a petulant cat.

"Emotionally drained." That, wasn't the answer he was expecting, then Shouta mumbled something else before sighing and resigning himself to the fact that he was going to be tired for the whole day.

"What happened?"

Shouta grabbed his hero costume out of the wardrobe, "we have a son now."

"I'm sorry. *What*?" Hizashi paused, halfway through putting on his jacket.

"Talked with Dabi last night, he said he'd like to be part of our family" Shouta grinned at him, and it took Hizashi several, long, seconds to process what had just been said, we have another kid, *we have another kid!* "Sunshine? Are you going to say anything or?"

"Are you going to tell Izuku the good news or should I?" Hizashi asked, brain finally catching up to reality.

"Whoever sees them first, they would pout if we waited even a minute to tell them" Shouta gave him a kiss before leaving to start the coffee maker.

Hizashi smiled, it was really only a matter of time before Dabi was fully integrated into the family, but sooner was definitely better than later.

When he walked into the kitchen to make breakfast, he was greeted by the sight of a very delighted Izuku conversing with Dabi and asking about a million questions about what happened last night. Shouta was standing off to the side, coffee in hand and not helping Dabi out of the barrage of questions he was clearly struggling to keep up with. Hizashi sighed, "good morning little listeners, Izuku stop interrogating your, uh, brother?" He looked at Dabi who shrugged, but Hizashi could see the small smile on his face. Izuku also seemed to have noticed as their eyes lit up and they jumped up from their seat, grinning widely, although they did stop the questioning and grabbed their own cup of

coffee. Dabi himself had already finished a cup, and Hizashi could feel the headache of future lectures about the health effects of too much caffeine. Why was he surrounded by perpetually tired people?

“Alright then, I’ll just get started on breakfast, anything you can’t eat?” He asked Dabi.

“Eh, as long as it’s not *fish*” Dabi made a disgusted face like fish had personally offended him and Hizashi had to supress a laugh.

He started getting the ingredients to make omelettes when Dabi walked up to him, “do you need any help?”

Hizashi blinked “uh, not really, did you need to get away from those two?” He nodded towards the other end of the kitchen where Shouta and Izuku were petting the cats.

“No, it’s just, it kind of feels weird to leave you to do everything while I’m just crashing on your couch.” Dabi clearly looked uncomfortable, fair enough, Hizashi never particularly liked sitting back and letting other people do all the work either.

“Well, if you want to help, could you cut these into tiny pieces? I’m making omelettes,” Hizashi handed Dabi the vegetables he just washed.

Dabi nodded and started chopping while Hizashi started cracking the eggs, he was a bit worried at first, but Dabi seemed to be handling the knife pretty well. “Where’d you learn how to cook?” Hizashi asked.

Dabi shrugged “mum wasn’t always, *capable*, of making meals, so me and Yu- I mean, my sister, we had to learn.”

Hizashi grimaced at the explanation “yeah, that’s pretty much how I learned to cook too.”

Dabi raised an eyebrow “your father?”

“Nah, the bastard left a few days after I was born, but my mother never quite recovered, mentally speaking,” Hizashi shook his head, that wasn’t really a part of his life he liked to think about.

Dabi scoffed “that’s parents for you, my mum ended up a mental hospital after everything my shitty excuse of a father did.”

“If you don’t mind, what happened?” Hizashi asked, he was curious

but he wasn't going to force an answer.

Dabi shrugged "I don't really know, it happened after I ran away."

"You've been keeping track of your family?"

"Uh, yeah, kind of" that seemed to be where this line of questioning was going to end.

Hizashi never liked silence, sure he could be quiet if he wanted to, but why would he when that's how he spent his life until middle school? So, he talked, anything that came to mind was fair game, about his friends, or work, or even just a random dog he saw the other day. Eventually he figured out that Dabi was equally as talkative, smiling as he shared stories of his siblings, Hizashi suspected some of the these would make far more sense if Dabi wasn't omitting any identifying information. Still, it was nice to hear about his family, and clearly it was nice for Dabi to talk about them.

Despite the extra help, all that talking meant that making breakfast took just as much time as normal. Izuku and Shouta had set the table, which was the only thing Shouta was allowed to do to help; Izuku was welcome in the kitchen, Hizashi would be damned if his kid didn't learn how to cook, but they might have just wanted to leave him and Dabi alone.

Hizashi had to remind Izuku several times that they had to finish eating before they got late for school, they could always talk to Dabi later, it wasn't like they had to wait a whole month anymore. Izuku grinned sheepishly, they probably still had a million and a half things to say to Dabi, who was now their brother, a concept which seemed to still be sinking in when they left for UA. Dabi was apparently just going to stay in the apartment until they got back, when Hizashi asked if he didn't have any other plans he'd just replied that he didn't know the area and he didn't know any people here.

Izuku and Shouta had already gone out the door when Dabi tapped his arm, looking hesitant.

"What is it little listener?"

"You mentioned that one of your co-workers is Thirteen, right?" Ah, right, Anan had been the one to save Dabi's life, and done so out of costume, which had caused a bit of commotion within the family and several concerns about their safety.

“Yeah, why?”

“Just, thank them for me? I didn’t exactly get the chance earlier.” Dabi looked away, like he was embarrassed.

“Yeah, I’ll let them know, although you could always thank them yourself the next time you see them.” Hizashi knew that Anan would be delighted to hear the message, not because of the thank you, they didn’t like people thanking them for just doing their job, however they had been texting the family group chat non-stop for updates on Dabi’s condition.

Dabi smiled “thanks, I probably will.”

Shouta half-yelled from outside the apartment to reminded him that they were going to be late if he kept messing around. “Right, right, I’m coming,” Hizashi called back before turning to Dabi “we’ll be back in a few hours, don’t let the cats destroy anything, see you later kiddo.” Hizashi reached out and ruffled Dabi’s hair, something which earned him a swat on the hand and a half-hearted glare from a grinning Dabi.

Dabi watched the door close, it was just him and his thoughts for a few hours. Mop rubbed up against his leg, begging for attention, he reached down and picked her up.

“They really do care about me, don’t they?” he asked the cat, who just let out a small meow which he chose to believe was her agreeing with him.

Dabi looked out of the window, which actually had a decent view, “Yumi, Natsu, I promise I’ll be a better brother, to Izuku, and to you if we ever meet again.”

Chapter End Notes

Hizashi needs more love damn it!!!

Chapter 43: Hair Dye

Chapter Summary

Nemuri and Anan visit their nephew

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Nemuri loved her partner, of course she did, that was why she married them. Anan was wonderful and kind and selfless and beautiful and Nemuri could keep listing things for hours. Most importantly for this situation, Anan was so, *incredibly,* empathetic. They were a classic bleeding heart, something that some people would consider detrimental for their profession. They always talked to the people they rescued, asking about family, friends, pets, even sentimental items, anything that might have been caught in the destruction. No matter what it was they'd go right back into the disaster zone to find it, once going into a flood risk zone where the water was already knee deep to find a kid's stuffed sheep. Nemuri both loved and hated Anan's empathy, loved it for how brave and kind her partner was, hated it because it made any rescue operation ten times more stressful. She knew there would probably be a day when they would go looking for someone or something, and never come back. Even worse was seeing what happened when they failed to save someone, seeing that haunted look in their eyes, the nightmares that always followed for days on end.

That was why she didn't bat an eye at their behaviour after saving Dabi from the fire. Their almost obsessive checking for updates on whether he was alright, the constant worrying that was only set aside when they were doing their job. Fires were some of the most dangerous kinds of disasters, even if the flames didn't get you, and you didn't get heat stroke, you were still in danger of choking on all the smoke you breathed in. Sometimes, even saving someone from the disaster wouldn't save their life, and unlike earthquakes or landslides, you couldn't evaluate their chances until they're already in the ambulance and fighting for their life.

When Hizashi told them that Dabi was fine, they had been relieved, in fact they'd almost cried. And Nemuri had personally been elated to

find out that she now had a nephew. That had ultimately resulted in Nemuri and Anan showing up the next day to greet the newest member of the family. Dabi seemed to be far more interested in talking to Anan, which was understandable, he tried to thank them but that went about as well as normal, with Anan insisting that they were just doing their job. He did bring up that time when Nemuri first met him and decided the best way to start a conversation was by flirting with him. Not her best idea sure, but he was walking away, and she panicked! They also got the address where Dabi's new apartment was, in case they wanted to visit again, or rather, Anan got the address. Surprisingly it was within walking distance of their own apartment.

And finally, a whole week after Dabi had moved into the apartment, Nemuri and Anan both had days off at the same time. If they were going to hang out with their nephew, they didn't want their hero work to force them to leave after only an hour or two. So here they were, strolling down the street, hand in hand, on a kind of day that they'd normally spend laughing at trashy rom coms. Nemuri was also carrying a bag of cookies, she didn't know what kind Dabi would like, so she had bought a variety. Cookies were always a safe bet as a gift, because even if you don't know what people want, everybody likes a good cookie.

It took them a few minutes to actually find which apartment was Dabi's but eventually they found the right door. Nemuri knocked on the door, complete silence, okay, that was odd, she knew he was home, and he knew they were coming over. They waited a bit before Anan got impatient and knocked on the door again, this time it was met with the sound of something falling over. The pair exchanged equally worried looks as there continued to be the sounds of someone scrambling about. Just as they were contemplating trying to force the door open, they heard the lock click open, and Dabi opened the door. Everything seemed fine, the inside of the apartment was a bit messy, but nothing alarming. And aside from the still broken arm, Dabi also seemed unharmed, although his hoodie would hide any injuries.

"Hi, you showed up early" Dabi seemed weirdly nervous, he kept fiddling with the hood of his hoodie, even though it was already covering most of his head, leaving only his face visible.

"What do you mean? We showed up on time, didn't we?" Anan turned to Nemuri questioningly, she checked her phone and nodded, they said eleven o'clock, it was currently four minutes past that.

Dabi cursed under his breath “I guess I lost track of time.”

“It happens to the best of us” Nemuri assured him.

“Yeah, I lose track of time so often it’s a wonder I get anything done in the first place” Anan joked.

That caused Dabi to laugh, good, he seemed stressed. Nemuri smiled, “oh, by the way” she said, holding up the bag of cookies “we brought you something.”

He smiled back at her and put the bag on the kitchen island. “Sorry about the mess, I was looking for, something” he glared at the mess in the living room “my organizing skills are, lacking.”

Anan frowned “I thought Hizashi and Shouta helped you sort everything out?” Now that Nemuri was looking closer, the things strewn across the couches, were all just a bit charred, or at least stained with soot. Shouta had gone and hunted down all of Dabi’s belongings that survived the fire. Meanwhile Hizashi and Izuku had gone with Dabi to buy stuff like clothes, food, any necessities that he was missing.

“Yeah, but I left some stuff in the boxes, told them I’d deal with it myself, somehow I got the stubborn bastards to back off.”

Nemuri laughed “what a miracle, now if only you could tell me the secret.”

“Honey, we both know you’re just as bad when it comes to helping people, we all are, it’s why we’re heroes” Anan shook their head.

Dabi frowned “of course, that’s why *you* are heroes.” Nemuri wasn’t sure he meant to say that out loud and politely ignored it, sharing another look with Anan.

“Anyways, what are you looking for?” Nemuri asked, looking over the pile of things.

“Really?” Dabi glared at her “what part of me saying I’d deal with it myself makes you think I want help?”

Nemuri smiled sheepishly “sorry, Anan is right, it’s a habit.”

Dabi rolled his eyes, “whatever.” He pulled at his hoodie again, Nemuri frowned, was there something wrong?

“Is everything alright darling? You seem stressed” she asked.

“I’m fine damn it” he snapped, taking a step forward, and then immediately backed away, “sorry, I mean, everything is fine”.

“It doesn’t sound like everything is fine” Anan frowned.

Dabi messed with his hoodie again, “there is nothing I want to tell you” he said firmly.

“Alright, alright” Nemuri said, putting a hand on Anan’s shoulder, getting them to step back. “How about we forget about this whole interaction and just talk like we originally planned?”

Dabi seemed relieved at that and readily agreed, so they talked for a while, mostly getting to know each other. They decided to play twenty questions, and at the question of ‘least favourite person’ Nemuri and Anan were all too happy to bitch about some of their coworkers. They were even more happy to add fuel to the flames when Dabi started ranting about Endeavor. Nemuri had never worked with the guy personally, but she was good friends with some heroes that did, and they all said he was awful. Anan just complained about having to deal with the aftermath of several of his fights.

As fun as it was to find out random facts about Dabi, Nemuri couldn’t help but notice that he was still stressed, no matter how hard he tried to hide it. She was very good at seeing that sort of thing, a side effect of being friends with Hizashi, who was always far too quick to wave everyone’s concerns away with a smile.

They ended up staying for lunch and Anan insisted on helping Dabi with the cooking. When they were almost done, Nemuri grabbed some plates and chopsticks. The kitchen was a bit cramped with all three of them, so she tried to move out of the way, accidentally pushing both Anan and Dabi several times. At one point she bumped into Dabi while they were both putting things on the kitchen island.

“Oh, shoot, sorry” Nemuri quickly put down the plate she was carrying and turned to make sure the food hadn’t gotten spilt. She gasped, the shove had managed to mess up Dabi’s hoodie, exposing a bit of his hair.

It was *white.*

She recovered quickly and finished setting the table. She then turned and took another look at Dabi, who was actively trying to fix his

hoodie and pull the hood back over his head “did you dye your hair? Or is that its normal colour and you dyed it black?”

He froze like a deer in headlights, “uhh, I-” he stuttered.

Anan held up their hands “hey, we won’t judge.”

Dabi now looked confused “you, uh, don’t have questions?”

“What? I mean, kind of, but it’s none of our business why you dyed your hair.” Was there something they were missing? Nemuri frowned, Dabi looked so panicked a second ago, was there a reason his hair would be a problem? Nemuri took another good look at him, there *was* something, she almost thought she recognized him but couldn’t pin down exactly where.

“You, don’t know? Or, you know what, never mind” he seemed relieved, and then continued trying and failing to fix his hoodie.

Nemuri reached out and pulled the hood up for him, he smiled at her, “thanks.”

“I’m guessing you don’t really like that colour?”

“It’s-” Dabi paused as if debating whether to tell them something “it’s my natural hair colour, and you already know how I feel about my family” he frowned at the mention of them.

Anan smiled sympathetically “dyeing your hair to escape from family ties? I completely understand” they reached up to fluff their own, very distinct, hair.

That seemed to be the right thing to say as Dabi visibly relaxed “I uh, I thought I had enough time to re-dye my hair before you showed up, but I don’t think my hair dye survived the fire.”

Well, that was a problem, but Nemuri had an idea, she checked the time, perfect. “Hey, do you mind if Hizashi finds out about this?” She asked, pulling up their messages.

“Uh, I guess not, why?”

“He should be off patrol in a little while, I can ask him to pick up some hair dye and come over.”

“Oh, that, yeah that’s fine” Dabi still looked like he was waiting for something else to happen, Nemuri wasn’t sure what, but she sent the

text to Hizashi anyways.

Hizashi was very confused when he read the text from Nemuri. Black hair dye? Dabi dyes his hair? Huh, Hizashi wondered what colour it normally was. He just picked up everything needed for hair dyeing and headed over to Dabi's apartment. A few people glanced at him every now and then, but they didn't say anything. It always amused him how unrecognizable he was when he just took his speaker off and had his hair down, as if the rest of the outfit wasn't a dead give-away. Then again, he'd seen some incredibly talented cosplayers, maybe people just thought he was one of them.

Walking into the apartment he was greeted with a fascinating scene. Anan and Nemuri were cleaning up plates from what was probably their lunch, chatting like nothing was wrong, while Dabi was seated on a chair and staring into the distance like the world was ending before his eyes. Woah, that's pretty cool, he thought as he stared at Dabi's hair, pure white was a rare colour, it also looked weirdly familiar.

Nemuri was the first to notice him "Zashi! There you are doll, did you find everything?"

He held up the bag "yep! Everything we need to fix this mess." He helped Anan clear a space on the floor, making sure nothing in the vicinity could get stained, then laid out the contents of the bag.

Dabi looked on in confusion "uh, what are you doing? And why do you have an extra brush and pair of gloves? You know the box is gonna have those, right?"

Hizashi nodded, taking off his jacket so that it didn't get stained, luckily he wasn't too attached to this t-shirt, "yeah, but I thought it would be easier if Nemuri helped me."

"What?" Dabi sounded even more confused now.

Hizashi looked him dead in the eye "your arm is literally broken. How exactly were you planning on dyeing your hair?"

Dabi stared at him, trying to think of a response, before sighing and sitting on the floor next to Hizashi. Nemuri was already wearing black so even if her clothes *did* get stained at least it wouldn't be visible.

"Alright, this is going to take a while" she said sitting on the other side of Dabi.

It only took them a few minutes to fully colour his hair, luckily, they didn't get anything on their clothes. Hizashi disposed of the gloves before he forgot he was wearing them. It would be a disaster if he got any dye in his own hair. The instructions on the box said the wait time was twenty minutes, Hizashi filled the time by talking about his patrol. Afterwards Dabi went off to wash his hair, and came back looking back to normal.

Nemuri grinned and started complementing Dabi, assuring him that you couldn't even tell that it was hair dye.

Dabi, however, looked distracted, thinking for a while before interrupting Nemuri "I think you guys deserve an explanation."

Hizashi tilted his head "for what?"

Dabi gestured at his hair "this, and, everything really, I mean, at this point it's only a matter of time before you guys figure it out on your own, and I'd rather tell you on my own terms."

"You mean, who your family is?" Nemuri asked, shaking her head "sweetie, it's not like we're going to go hunting for every white haired family in Japan to see which ones are missing a son."

Dabi laughed, rejoining the circle on the floor "I'm surprised you haven't recognized me already, I mean, my face was all over the news a couple of years ago, it was the talk of the nation."

"What, is your family famous or something?" Hizashi asked.

"Yeah, well, my father is famous, the rest of my family is only by association."

Anan had been staring very intensely at Dabi after he mentioned his face being on the news. They were likely trying to match him to any missing child reports they remembered. Their brow furrowed "wait, no, that, he was declared dead so that's impossible" they muttered to themself.

"I'm pretty sure Kurose figured it out" Dabi grinned "yeah, technically the world thinks I'm dead, not that my old man tried *that* hard to find me."

"So you're..." Anan's eyes widened "that, explains a lot honestly, including why you hate Endeavor so much."

Hizashi was officially lost, and looking at Nemuri she was just as confused as he was. “Uh, who exactly are we talking about?”

“Todoroki Touya.” Anan looked at Dabi, who just nodded in confirmation.

Nemuri gasped “oh, so then, your father...” She shook her head "oh sweetie..."

Hizashi wondered if he could get away with hurting Endeavor if he was careful enough, or maybe some nasty insults. He could probably slip some in the next time he was in an interview.

“Yeah, I, know I’ve told you a lot, but I haven’t really told you everything he’s done.”

“There’s *more?*” Hizashi was appalled, he’d heard about everything from neglect to spousal abuse, and now Dabi was saying that’s not the worst thing Endeavor did?

“How on earth could it be worse?” Nemuri asked, both morbidly curious and very afraid of the answer.

“Do you know what a quirk marriage is?”

*“I’m sorry **what!?**”* Anan looked absolutely horrified, an expression mirrored by Hizashi and Nemuri.

“Those, *are* illegal, right?” Hizashi asked, because he could have sworn that was the law, and even if it wasn’t, it was deeply fucked up from an ethics standpoint.

“Yeah” Nemuri agreed “I mean, I don’t trust the commission as far as I could throw them, but at least they don’t condone, let’s just call it what it is, *literal eugenics*.”

Dabi shook his head “it wasn’t legally a quirk marriage, everything was done under the table and as far as the world was concerned my parents were just in love.”

“And I’m guessing nobody in your mother’s family wanted to speak up against the number two hero?” Hizashi asked.

“Pretty much, the only reason me and my siblings exist is because *he* wanted to create the perfect heir, one that could surpass All Might when he couldn’t.” Dabi scoffed “he thought my mother’s ice quirk

would balance out his fire, make an unstoppable hero. I would have been an only child if I didn't inherit the wrong resistance, I don't know if that would have been better or worse."

Anan, who had just been repeatedly muttering "what the fuck" the entire time, seemed to realise something "didn't you say you only had two siblings? Endeavor has three other kids."

Dabi frowned, "oh, right, Shoto, I guess he's technically my brother."

"You don't think so?" Nemuri asked.

"He's the perfect child, with the perfect quirk. He wasn't allowed to interact with the rest of us, the old man didn't want us 'corrupting his masterpiece' or whatever. Stupid kid replaced me, and took away any love my siblings could have gotten from our mum."

Anan frowned "that seems a bit unfair, he's a child."

"Does that matter?" Dabi scowled, bitterness seeping into his voice "if that bastard wasn't born, maybe things wouldn't have gotten this bad, maybe Endeavor would have bothered to save me."

Anan shook their head "that's just more of Endeavor's fault, besides from what you've said, saving you would have been protecting his legacy, not because he cared about you."

Dabi sighed "I know, I know, I just..."

Nemuri put a hand on Dabi's shoulder "it's always easier to blame someone you can disregard instead of blaming an authority figure, especially a parent. But Todoroki Shoto has done nothing wrong, he's just as much a victim here as you and your siblings."

"I guess, but, I still can't see him as a brother," Dabi shrugged.

"That's not what we're saying" Anan said "you don't have to call him your brother, just, it's not his fault, it's your father's."

Dabi nodded "I know. It's always been that stupid bastard's fault."

Nemuri sighed "honestly, I'm not as shocked as I probably should be, Endeavor's always been an asshole, no surprise he's even worse to his wife and kids, right Zashi?" She turned "uh, Hizashi? Doll?"

"I'm contemplating murder."

Anan nodded “we all are, but I think we know that’s not going to happen.”

Dabi looked at them incredulously and shook his head, laughing, “and I thought Izuku and Aizawa were feral.”

Nemuri grinned “darling our *entire* family is like this, they’ll be calling for Endeavor’s blood the second we tell them.”

Dabi looked mildly concerned at that “alright then…” he said, a bit of fear in his voice, “I don’t think it would be a bad idea, to tell the rest of the family, just that, I’d want my siblings to be in on the plan. Fuyumi would have to be convinced not to tell our father. And I think Natsuo might kill me himself if he learned we planned to take down Endeavour and didn’t let him have some of the fun.”

Hizashi nodded “it’s the start of a plan at least, I’m sure we can come up with the rest soon.”

“Sounds good to me” Anan agreed. “Oh, by the way, Dabi?”

“What?”

“Now that we know, do you still want us to call you Dabi, or would you prefer Touya?”

He opened his mouth, then paused, closed it, and then answered “I’m, not sure, normally I’d hate being called Touya, but, somehow, if it’s you guys, it, doesn’t feel bad at all.”

“Huh. What do you mean sweetie?” Nemuri asked.

“Everyone who called me Touya, my classmates and, *‘friends’*, all they saw was Endeavor’s son.” he looked at the three of them “but I know that’s not who you see, you just see, *me*. So I don’t think I’d mind if you called me Touya.” He smiled at them.

Anan smiled, “it’s nice to properly meet you, Touya.”

Chapter End Notes

Welp, we're gonna need a new number two hero soon.

Chapter 44: Reluctant Friendship

Chapter Summary

The first step of the plan is put into motion.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

Izuku nervously bounced their leg as the car neared the venue. Tenya looked equally nervous, constantly repeating the plan under his breath. Uncle Tensei seemed calm, but he was fervently scanning the area, looking for one hero in particular. This was just a social event, nothing as big as some of the parties the Iidas had been to before, but they weren't just here to rub elbows with other hero families, no, they were here on a mission. A task that was the first step in a plan that would hopefully result in a major upheaval of hero society. They had to befriend Todoroki Shoto.

Izuku wasn't too keen on the idea, they'd met him exactly once and that had quickly gone south. They doubted he'd forgive them for punching him and calling out his quirkism, but this had to work. As much as he tried, Nedzu could not find a way to contact the other two siblings without raising suspicions. And if Endeavor had any inkling of what was going on, then he could find out about Touya. None of them wanted to find out what would happen after that. In the worst-case scenario, Endeavor would try to get Touya back into the family. Izuku doubted he could win that fight, not with Nedzu as his opponent and their entire family standing with Touya. But it would undoubtedly attract media attention, attention which would focus on Touya, who didn't want his identity to be public until he was ready. And while Touya was aware of the risks, his siblings weren't even aware of the plan, or their brother being alive, and being dragged into the public eye without warning would hurt them even worse.

So the plan was that Izuku and Tenya would try and get in the good graces of Todoroki Shoto, and hopefully, eventually, get the leverage to get all three siblings away from Endeavor for long enough to bring them in on the plan. Uncle Tensei offered to distract Endeavor, and while one hero constantly clinging onto someone would look suspicious, he wouldn't be alone. Three others in the family had accepted their invites to the event, even though they'd been planning to decline. Papa and Aunt Nemuri were going to help Uncle Tensei

run interference. Meanwhile Uncle Kazumi would keep a distant eye on Izuku, Tenya, and Todoroki, just in case things got ugly and he needed to step in.

Even though Papa had suggested taking Izuku with him, the idea was quickly shot down. Tenya's friends would be waiting for them, and if one of them noticed Izuku arrive with Present Mic, they would ask too many questions. Not to mention that it was far easier to sneak away from paparazzi when you have multiple people blocking their view.

Izuku slunk around to the back of the venue, where there were far less people. This was why they always arrived early, so that they could find a place where they could hide from the cameras. Eventually they managed to find a table that was far enough away that they wouldn't be seen unless someone knew where to look. Plus, the tablecloths were long enough that if a reporter *did* come snooping they could just duck under the table. Which is exactly what they did while waiting for the rest of the group to show up, leaving a pencil on the centre to let Tenya find them.

Soon enough they heard the distinct footsteps of four people. Tenya's even stomping, the lighter clicks of Yaoyorozu's heels, the dance-like rhythm of Monoma, and the erratic steps that only Kaminari was chaotic enough to cause.

Izuku lifted the tablecloth just enough to confirm their suspicions before crawling out and waving at the group. And was immediately hugged by Kaminari, much to the mild disapproval of both Monoma and Yaoyorozu.

"Hey buddy! Good to see you!" Kaminari exclaimed, just a bit too loudly for how close they were. Izuku just gave him a pat on the back as the hug wasn't leaving much room for them to move, or breathe. They also nodded at the other three, Yaoyorozu just returned the nod, politely smiling. Monoma on the other hand, being over-dramatic as usual, gave a stage bow and a smirk which made Tenya giggle. Eventually Izuku gave up on getting Kaminari to let go of them and just picked him up, holding him over their shoulder like a sack of rice. They were fine with having the meeting like this, and Kaminari was clearly having a fun time, but one disappointed look from Yaoyorozu and they both went to their seats.

This was usually where the fun began, and by 'fun' Izuku meant them and Kaminari being chaotic balls of energy while the other three either enabled them or tried to reign them in. They wouldn't *really*

consider Kaminari, Monoma and Yaoyorozu to be close friends, they were really still Tenya's friends since he saw them far more often. But Izuku had been helping them practice their quirks, or just helping Kaminari get everyone to stop being so uptight. That second goal was still a work in progress.

"So, how has everyone been doing?" Izuku made sure to sign a bit slower than normal, Monoma and Kaminari were only barely capable of understanding JSL, even though they'd made considerable efforts since they first met Izuku.

"I've been alright, my parents got a textbook for me so that I could start memorizing the more complex chemical formulas, although memorizing the uses of the substances has been a bit trickier" Yaoyorozu said. She held out her hand and a square piece of blue fabric interwoven with red thread emerged from her palm, she frowned at it "oh dear, that's not the pattern I wanted."

"Hey, I think it looks cool!" Kaminari encouraged her, although Izuku wasn't sure she was reassured, but they supposed it was the thought that counted. "I've gotten way better at controlling my shocks, look!" Kaminari cupped his hands together and made small sparks jump around his palms "this is all I've got though, any higher and it's way tougher to keep it under control."

"That's amazing!" Izuku grinned at him. "Oh, and before I forget," they turned to Monoma "did the idea work?"

Monoma shrugged "kind of? I figured out how to copy and swap between two different quirks, but I'm not sure I can use them both at once."

"Partial success then" Izuku noted before scribbling down the new information. Being given free rein to observe a set of quirks as they developed was fascinating, as they normally observed simple snapshots of people's capabilities.

However, before they could continue the discussion, Tenya cleared his throat, looking at them pointedly, then looking over his shoulder. Following his gaze Izuku saw none other than Todoroki Shoto, perfect, now was the time to put the plan into action. Izuku took a deep breath, they turned to Tenya "you explain to them" they pointed at everyone else. They had prepared for this, everyone involved with the plan had a few simple lies that they would use if questioned. Theirs was that they were giving him a single chance to apologize and

reconcile, which was also technically true, just not the main truth. The plan had been for Izuku to explain the 'reason' why they were trying to befriend Todoroki, however, now was too good of an opportunity to pass up. Hopefully Tenya could lie convincingly for once in his life.

Todoroki was already walking away and Izuku had to jog to reach him before he could disappear into the crowd. They were fully aware of the cameras in the area, and were carefully staying in the blind spots, but the reporters wandering around were a different story. They somehow managed to seize Todoroki's arm, and almost got punched, only saved by their quick reaction time. Todoroki glared at them "oh, it's you, come to humiliate me again?" He challenged, pulling his arm out of their grasp.

Izuku mentally sighed, mustering their friendliest smile, they knew this wasn't going to be easy "I wanted to talk to you."

He scoffed "and why would I waste my time with your grovelling?"

Izuku had to take a deep breath, they were doing this for Touya, they weren't going to let this jerk's attitude get in the way of that. "I never said I was going to apologize, I just said I wanted to talk."

"My point stands, why should I waste my time with someone like *you*?"

Izuku gritted their teeth as they willed their smile to stay friendly, "because," they looked around to make sure nobody was looking, "I wanted to talk about your family."

Todoroki's eyes narrowed "fine, say whatever mindless gossip you heard." Izuku swore the temperature dropped at least a degree or two. It seemed that quirks being effected by emotions was a shared trait in the Todoroki family.

"I don't think it's a good idea to speak out here" Izuku could already see at least two reporters who were getting a little too close for comfort. They grabbed Todoroki's arm and pulled him a few feet away, around a corner and away from any cameras.

"What was that for" Todoroki hissed, glaring at them.

"I don't think you want the media to know about your parents' marriage, right?" Izuku let the friendly smile slip into something more serious, although hopefully not hostile.

Todoroki's eyes widened, probably the most emotion he'd shown so far. "What do you mean?" He asked, so, he was feigning ignorance, Izuku let a smirk fall onto their face, two could play that game.

"You'll just have to follow me and find out" they backed away a little, following a safe path towards an area away from both the crowd and where Tenya and his friends were seated. Todoroki looked irritated, but followed anyways.

"Alright, I'm right where you want me, now tell me what you know" Izuku could have sworn they heard *desperation* in Todoroki's voice.

"Your parents are in a quirk marriage, you and your siblings were conceived in an attempt to create your quirk, your siblings are being neglected, and Endeavor is hurting you for 'training' because he wants you to surpass All Might" they paused to make it seem like they were thinking, "I'm pretty sure that's everything." It wasn't quite *everything* but saying anything about Touya, or even a more specific description, would have raised suspicions as to where they got the information.

Todoroki was silent, mouth opening and closing, like he couldn't quite decide what to say, then, "who else knows?" He whispered eyes darting around the room, now fully concerned about privacy.

"My family, but only them" Izuku looked over at the crowd, barely picking out where Aunt Nemuri and Uncle Tensei were lurking. They checked the time and sighed, they only had an hour left before the event ended, "we can help you, but we need your cooperation" they looked him in the eyes, imploring him to make the right call.

"I'll think about it" he finally said after an agonizing minute. Izuku was a bit disappointed, but they supposed that was the best they could hope for at the moment.

Todoroki turned away to leave before looking back "so you're going back to your little group, and nobody else will hear about this, right?"

Izuku nodded, and, as an afterthought "you're welcome to join us, if you can keep things civil."

Todoroki looked confused "why? The last time we met we nearly fought."

Izuku shrugged, they weren't exactly *thrilled* about the idea, but Tenya told the others they were trying to talk sense into Todoroki, so they might as well follow through on that idea. "I think you could be a

decent person, you're a kid, like the rest of us, it's not your fault Endeavor taught you to be an asshole."

Todoroki looked slightly taken aback by that, "well..." He thought for a bit "fine, I suppose you clearly aren't as, *incompetent* as I thought you were."

Izuku was sure that was meant to be a complement, but they still bristled a bit at the implications, they were going to have to work on those issues as well.

When they got to the table, Kaminari and Monoma were holding a wire in their hands, which was attached to a light bulb, probably made by Yaoyorozu, it was rather bright, but they seemed to be having fun turning it on and off. Izuku wasn't entirely sure what prompted this odd experiment, but they weren't going to complain about more data to study.

Tenya was the first one to notice them "Izuku, you got Todoroki to listen?" They nodded as they took their seat next to Kaminari, with Todoroki taking the last seat between Tenya and Yaoyorozu.

A hush fell over the rest of the table as the other three noticed Todoroki's presence, Monoma and Yaoyorozu looked over at Kaminari who seemed rather nervous. Izuku looked pointedly at Todoroki, who cleared his throat awkwardly "I'm, sorry, for what I said to you on, multiple occasions" he said. Izuku thought he could have been a little more sincere, but it was a step in the right direction.

Kaminari blinked, surprised at the apology "yeah, some of that stuff really hurt dude, just, don't do it again and we're cool, okay?"

Todoroki shrugged, seemingly uninterested in continuing the conversation. Izuku supposed it was a bit too much to hope that he was actually trying to make amends instead of just keeping an eye on them to make sure they kept to their word.

The silence was quickly filled by slightly awkward chatter that smoothed back out into their usual dynamic. Todoroki was mostly silent, offering a monotone remark every now and then but nothing mean or condescending. The rest of the event went pretty smoothly, with the exception of one particularly memorable incident.

Monoma had just finished explaining a stage play his mother had taken him to see, when suddenly Izuku saw the flickers of small flames moving amongst the crowd and slowly heading towards them.

They froze up, which Tenya quickly noticed, looking around for the source of their distress. His eyes widened when he noticed, tapping Todoroki on the arm and pointing to where he could catch glimpses of Endeavor. Izuku ducked under the table, barely peeking out to see what was going on. If Endeavor was looking for his son, it would be terrible for Todoroki to be seen with some random kid, especially if Endeavor interrogated him about who Izuku was.

Just as he was getting too close for comfort, the sound of a thwap and a splash was almost drowned out by the crowd. Endeavor's flames went out and he was looking around for whoever the hell did that, surrounded by other heroes who were clearly trying not to snicker. Izuku could see one of the reporters had a camera pointed directly at Endeavor. Someone threw a water ballon at Endeavor's head, on *live television*. Izuku knew several members of their family would be sending recordings of that through the group chat for weeks.

The crawled out from under the table and took their seat as Endeavor stormed off in search of whoever did that. Izuku shared a glance with Tenya, and they both broke out into a fit of giggles, quickly joined by Kaminari and even Monoma let out a few huffs of laughter. Yaoyorozu looked rather alarmed at that and glanced over at Todoroki, clearly worried that he might take offense to them laughing at his father. Much to everyone's surprise Todoroki had a hesitant smirk on his face.

"Who on earth would be brazen enough to do such a thing?" Monoma asked, clearly holding back laughter.

Again, Izuku and Tenya shared a glance, they knew exactly who would do that. Although where exactly Aunt Kazumi managed to find a water balloon, and then somewhere to throw it from where she wouldn't be seen, was a mystery. Izuku did remember seeing her holding her slingshot earlier, so perhaps she'd fired it from further away and used her quirk to aim it.

By the time the event was wrapping up, the group had adjusted to having Todoroki back in the fold, with Kaminari giving him a pat on the back as he was leaving. Slowly each person went to find their family members, with Todoroki being the last to leave. Before he went however, Izuku stopped him.

"What?" He asked, looking between Izuku and Tenya.

"If you do decide to accept my offer, you and your siblings should come to UA on next week's Saturday."

“And obviously, not a single word of this get out to anyone you don’t trust completely” Tenya added “there’s, someone who wants to see you three, and *only* you three.”

Todoroki looked puzzled, but Endeavor was calling for him and he said a quick goodbye to both of them.

Tenya and Izuku shared a high five as they walked over to where the rest of their family was standing. The six of them shared whatever exciting things happened to them at the event. Which was mostly Papa, Aunt Nemuri and Uncle Tensei complaining about having to talk to Endeavor for minutes at a time. Uncle Kazumi just confirmed what Izuku and Tenya had suspected, he was the one who threw the water balloon. Apparently he’d brought a few for just this purpose and just filled one up from a sink in the bathrooms.

Izuku and Tenya shared what happened with Todoroki, and it seemed that the mission was likely a success. Now all that was left to hope for was that, if Todoroki accepted the offer, then Touya would be able to talk his siblings into helping them. Izuku suspected that meeting was going to involve more chaos than normal.

Chapter 45: A long awaited reunion.

Chapter Summary

The Todoroki siblings go to UA and find an unexpected surprise.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue
Signed and Spoken Dialogue

“You know, this meeting’s gonna be a lot easier if you just quit fussin’ about.”

Touya glared at Takeda, who just shrugged and continued sharpening her knives. Touya sighed, he hadn’t expected this moment to be so, *nerve-wracking*. Of all the ways he’d ever imagined seeing his siblings again, in a meeting room at UA, about to plan out a way to take down their father, was not one of them. He had been pacing since he got here, even though everyone present had been part of the planning process, he couldn’t help but worry that something would go wrong. He couldn’t help but pace around the meeting room, waiting for Nedzu to tell everyone that his siblings had arrived at the gate. In all fairness, Izuku wasn’t much better, and neither was Tenya, those two were quietly whispering at each other. The only reason the room wasn’t smothered in an atmosphere of apprehension was the unexplainable calmness of the pro heroes, who were just talking amongst themselves. Touya assumed they were either faking it for the kids’ sake, and his, or they were *that* confident that things would work out. Given what he knew about each of them, the former option was far more likely.

Suddenly the intercom in the meeting room blared to life, Nedzu’s squeaky voice stilling the chatter.

“It appears that our guests have arrived, I hope everyone knows the plan thoroughly by now.”

As everyone took their seats, patiently waiting for the meeting to begin, Izuku, Touya, and the Iidas headed to the main doors. Inui had suggested that it would be best if the, *surprise*, of Touya being alive was dealt with before the plan was explained. Touya sighed, tapping his arm as he followed the others down the hallway, this was it, time

to see his siblings again. What would he say? What *could* he even say after so long? Should he apologize? Would they forgive him?

Someone tugged on his jacket, snapping him out of his thoughts to see Izuku looking at him worriedly, **"are you alright? You stopped walking."** They were doing that stare, like they could see all the secrets that someone had hidden, and those eyes promised to unravel *every single one*. It always unnerved him, just a little bit, he knew they didn't mean anything malicious by it, but that didn't make the feeling of someone staring into his very soul any less disturbing.

"I'm fine." He tried to look convincing, it clearly wasn't working as Izuku just frowned at him.

"You don't have to talk to them now if you don't want to, we could wait until after the meeting."

Touya shook his head, "no, better to get this over with now" he nudged Izuku forward and the two of them caught up to where the Iidas were waiting. He caught worried glances from both of them but smiled and waved away their concerns.

He waited patiently while the other three went to open the gates, it was far too risky for him to be out in the open when anyone passing by on the street could see him. So he stood in the shadow of the main building's doorway.

Shoto was the first one in, exchanging what looked like a polite greeting with Tenya and Izuku. Natsuo and Fuyumi were a bit more hesitant, Natsuo just looked around the place suspiciously, while Fuyumi tried to stall by talking. Still, they did walk past the gates, which closed behind them. Touya took a deep breath, no backing out of this now. He ran a hand through his hair, he'd washed out the hair dye before coming here. Hopefully he still looked enough like himself that at least Fuyumi would believe him.

As they got closer Touya could hear the conversation Fuyumi was *attempting* to keep light-hearted.

"So why did you call us here?" Natsuo asked, "all Shoto said was that you knew something important."

"Yes, well, I have a feeling I shouldn't be the one to explain that to you" Izuku was doing a very good job of hiding their nervousness.

"Ah yes, you said someone wanted to see us" Shoto said. Touya raised

an eyebrow in surprise, Izuku had said Shoto didn't show much emotion, but honestly, he was practically a robot with how little his expression changed. Touya didn't remember much of Shoto, but he definitely remembered all the crying he heard from his room. Endeavor probably managed to beat the emotions out of the kid, yet another reason to despise him thrown on an ever growing mountain of reasons.

"And why exactly should we trust this person?" Natsuo grumbled.

"Because he's the one who informed us about Endeavor's misdeeds" Tenya said rather aggressively, doing that weird arm chopping motion, it was rather adorable seeing the kid try to defend him.

Fuyumi froze "then, shouldn't father be here, if we were to discuss him?" No, absolutely not, that was the last thing Touya wanted.

Natsuo rolled his eyes, "oh please, like that would get anything productive done, the dumpster fire would just sweep it under the rug like he always does." Touya had to resist the urge to laugh, Natsuo always had an attitude, and it seemed to have only gotten worse as he grew.

"Why do you always have to think the worst of people Natsuo? We should have told father where we were going." Fuyumi insisted, Izuku and Tenya looked completely lost, and while Tenya's brother was trying to diffuse the situation it seemed his words were falling on deaf ears.

Natsuo didn't like fighting with his sister. Fuyumi was the only person in this accursed family that he could tolerate for more than an hour. What with Mum being gone, Shoto being constantly dragged away for training, Enji being the piece of shit he was, and Touya being, well. Natsuo didn't like to think about Touya too much, the one person who wouldn't shut down his anger at their father and call it senseless. The one who taught him how to throw a punch when he learned that Natsuo was getting bullied at school, and the one who'd stand up to their father when he went too far.

Touya was the reason that he would *never* understand Fuyumi's willingness to forgive Enji, the man who let Touya *die* because he didn't care enough to search for him. Natsuo's hands clenched into fists as he snapped back, "he would have locked us in the house! Don't you get it? This is our chance to get out of there!"

Fuyumi sighed “you’re only sixteen Natsuo, when you grow up you’ll see that picking fights won’t fix anything.”

“Oh? And sitting around doing *nothing* will?”

“I’m not doing ‘nothing’! I’m the only one trying to fix this family!” Natsuo froze, Fuyumi almost never raised her voice, it always caught him off guard.

“You really haven’t changed, have you Yumi?”

Natsuo spun to face the direction the voice had come from, a stranger in a hoodie stood in the corner of the doorway. “Hey, who the hell are you?”

“Oh come on Natsu, you know who I am” The stranger asked, pulling down the hood of his hoodie, revealing familiar white hair and piercing blue eyes. Natsuo thought he heard Fuyumi gasp next to him, but his mind was laser focused on the man in front of him, scarred and burnt but still recognizable.

“Touya!?”

Fuyumi and Natsuo had practically yelled when they realised who they were looking at. Shoto looked both shocked and bewildered as he stared between the three of them. Touya grinned at them “hey, did you miss me?”

“What? How?” Fuyumi stumbled over her words.

“It’s, really you?” Shoto asked, voice trembling slightly. This must have been a bit of a shock to him, he’d barely ever seen Touya before the fire, all he had were the stories Natsuo and Fuyumi told.

“It’s me,” Touya looked at the three of them, “and as for how, I’m not too sure either honestly, just dumb luck I guess.”

Natsuo had been standing slack-jawed the entire time, mind racing a mile a minute to process, *everything*. He took a deep breath, walked up to Touya. And decked him in the face.

“Ow, what the-”

Touya was interrupted as Natsuo hugged him fiercely, tears running down his face, “I missed you so much you absolute *bastard*.” He heard Touya laughing as he returned the hug for a bit before pulling back.

He put a hand up to his cheek where Natsuo's punch had landed, grinning "that was a mean left hook." His grin softened "I missed you too," he looked at Fuyumi, "both of you." Natsuo could see the tears welling up in Fuyumi's eyes as she hugged Touya tightly.

Once everyone had collected themselves, Fuyumi started asking Touya question after question. Like where he'd been, how he'd ended up here, and what he'd been doing for the last six years. Touya just held up a hand to silence her "look, we can catch up later, right now, we've got more important things to do. Unless you forgot why you were here in the first place?"

Shoto nodded "we are here to discuss what to do about father."

Fuyumi's expression soured somewhat at that, and Natsuo mentally prepared himself for another fight. But Touya got there first, putting a hand on Fuyumi's shoulder "do you *really* think he's going to change?"

Fuyumi sighed "if he doesn't, what would be left of our family? *Nothing.* It would be completely broken. I cannot allow that to happen."

"It wouldn't be broken, we'd still have each other, wouldn't we?" Touya asked "we don't need him, we can make this work on our own."

Fuyumi still looked unconvinced, but Natsuo spoke up "just, at least hear them out, please Yumi?".

She nodded "fine, I'll listen to what you have to say, but if I want no part of it you won't try and convince me."

Touya smiled "that's all we're asking."

He led them further into the building meeting up with the other three, who had apparently left to give them some privacy when Touya started talking. The one with fluffy green hair, Shoto had introduced them as Izuku, stared at Touya for a while, a question in their eyes. Touya just smiled at them, and they nodded, weird, whatever silent conversation they were having was dropped as Ingenium nudged both of them and gestured at them to keep walking.

Eventually they reached a meeting room, inside were a bunch of pro heroes, Touya informed them that this was everyone who knew of the plan. Natsuo recognized a bunch of them as staff here at UA, including Nedzu himself sitting at the head of the table, that explained the

meeting location. The Iidas took their seats next to Ectoplasm, and Izuku sat between Present Mic and a rather intimidating hero with a weird scarf. The remaining four seats were at the end of the table, Natsuo and Fuyumi sat on either side of Touya, with Shoto on Fuyumi's left. Once everyone was seated Nedzu started speaking which, despite his voice being rather quiet and squeaky, made the entire room feel much more serious. Even Shoto, who generally had an uncaring attitude seemed laser focused on the proceedings.

"I believe we all know why we are gathered here today, so let's just proceed with the main subject of this meeting." The screen behind Nedzu flickered to life, showing Endeavor's HPSC file. "It has been brought to our attention that Endeavor has committed several crimes, including spousal abuse, child abuse, child neglect, as well as engaging in the illegal practice of quirk marriage."

Natsuo winced as it was all just, *said*, like it was simple fact and not the worst part of his life. Hound Dog seemed to notice as his eyes snapped to Natsuo as Nedzu continued to talk and Natsuo continued to try and tune it out. Hound Dog nudged the hero next to him, a scary looking man with tusks who looked over at Natsuo and his siblings, and nodded at Hound Dog, understanding whatever signal had been sent between them. "Hey, Nedzu, we get it, he's a piece of shit who doesn't deserve to be a hero, there's no need to repeat all that to the kids here, can we get to the point?" Natsuo felt his siblings relax as the unknown hero hurried the meeting along.

"Right, my apologies," Nedzu flicked his tail as he looked each of them in the eyes, Touya was the only one who did a good job hiding his discomfort at the examining gaze. "While we have heard your brother's part of the story, we would like yours as well to corroborate. In addition, we felt it would be best if you were here to provide your input when we decide how to proceed."

Natsuo looked over at Fuyumi, he knew what *he* was going to say, but he hoped that Fuyumi wouldn't try to cover for Enji. Touya nudged him, nodding towards the table, encouraging him to go first. He took a few breaths, "well, I'm sure Touya told you most of it. And he's only gotten worse since Touya died, or, well" he looked over at a very much still alive Touya, the bastard seemed to be holding back laughter. "You know what I mean," Natsuo shoved Touya to get him to stop.

To his surprise, Fuyumi nodded "he expects far too much of Shoto, I've tried to get father to stop pushing him so hard but, I haven't

succeeded, *yet.*" Natsuo resisted the urge to roll his eyes as he heard Touya sigh next to him.

All eyes turned to Shoto, who simply shrugged "if I were to give a comprehensive list of the injuries my father has given me over the years we would be here for hours. I will say that broken bones are not uncommon, and a few times I did end up in the hospital, but the blame for those was thrown to wherever father could find a reasonable scapegoat."

Natsuo looked around the room, expecting to see the careful indifference he was used to with pro heroes and the HPSC. Yet the barely concealed *fury* on each person's face was oddly comforting. Nedzu was the only one who's expression hadn't changed, but that smile was just sharp enough that Natsuo wasn't sure *what* emotion he was feeling.

"Alright, while I will speak to you three personally on a later date to get more detailed statements, we have more than enough probable suspicion to investigate Endeavor" Nedzu tilted his head "what we should do now is formulate a plan of action, so to start, I have listed a few possibilities to discuss."

The meeting must have gone on for at least another hour as ideas were thrown around, a few were, more extreme, than others. Natsuo could barely keep up, but it seemed that Touya and Fuyumi were doing most of the talking anyways. There seemed to be very little opposition to the idea of launching a full investigation, but Fuyumi had vetoed that idea stating it would bring too much attention. Natsuo wouldn't have minded, but she was clearly uncomfortable with the idea, so it was back to the drawing board. In the end they decided to have Fuyumi, Natsuo and Shoto gather as much evidence as they could of their own abuse, while Nedzu and the other pros would unofficially look into the situation with their mother, as well as attempting to prove the quirk marriage. Then they would use all the gathered information to force the HPSC into taking action, as well as putting both Shoto and Natsuo under Fuyumi and Touya's custody. This would take much longer than an official investigation, but it would be completely covert until they pulled the trigger. Natsuo had pushed back a bit on the idea, they couldn't wait, who knows what might happen if Enji found out, how badly they'd get hurt. But with everything considered, it really was their best option, and Nedzu promised that, if it ever felt like Enji knew about the plan, UA would safeguard him and his siblings until the investigation was done.

As soon as the meeting wrapped up, Touya dragged him, Fuyumi and Shoto out to the hallway, followed closely by Izuku, Thirteen, who'd taken off their helmet, and the hero with the scarf.

"I think you wanted an explanation?" Touya asked them.

Shoto nodded "yes, how did any of this happen?"

Touya gestured to the other three "you can thank them."

Natsuo looked at the trio "a kid, a rescue hero, and, uh, sorry, I don't recognize you?"

The hero gave a small smile "good." Natsuo blinked in confusion. Why is that good? Thirteen elbowed the hero who sighed "The name's Aizawa Shouta, I'm an underground hero, Eraserhead." Oh, that made sense, Natsuo knew nothing about underground heroes other than the fact that they were super secretive, even among hero society, and practically non-existent to the public.

"So how did you three find Touya?" Natsuo asked.

"Well it was mostly Izuku and Shouta" Thirteen shrugged, looking at those two, "I didn't do much."

Touya glared at them "Kurose, you quite literally saved my life, I wouldn't call that 'not much'."

"Wait, wait, *what!?*" Fuyumi shook her head "alright, start from the beginning, I'm hearing this story, *now*."

"Well I *was* living in a shitty apartment building and, like half a year ago now, I got involved in a fight, which Izuku and Aizawa stopped."

"Wait, what was the kid doing there?" Natsuo interrupted.

Touya froze "ah, right, Izuku is... well" he looked over at Aizawa who shrugged and looked at Izuku, who grinned.

"I'm a vigilante"

Before Natsuo could ask any of the follow up question he had to *that* revelation. Shoto had a look of realization on his face "that's why you can punch so well."

"What?" Fuyumi asked, completely bewildered and a little concerned.

“I’ll tell you later” Shoto waved their questions away.

Touya cleared his throat “can I continue?” he asked impatiently. When nobody responded he continued “so anyways, apparently my appearance was concerning enough that Izuku here decided to tail me to my apartment to check on me” he half-heartedly glared at them “nearly gave me a damn heart attack when I saw them sitting on my windowsill.”

“I’m not sorry” Izuku smirked.

“Of course you aren’t you little gremlin” Touya ruffled Izuku’s hair playfully, Natsuo was shocked, Touya never initiated physical contact with anyone who wasn’t Fuyumi or himself. “Anyways, whatever they saw was concerning enough that told their *entire family* about me, which led to them constantly keeping an eye out for me.”

“Which includes both of us” Aizawa said pointing at himself and Kurose.

“And every other hero you saw in the meeting room” Touya added, and Natsuo pitied anyone who ever hurt this kid. “So, after being paranoid for over a week, I was basically cornered into letting Izuku and Aizawa check on me every month, that went on until, almost a month ago.” Touya sighed “and then some stupid villain attack caused the building to *catch fire.*”

“what!?” Natsuo exclaimed, his tone mirroring the horrified shock on both Fuyumi and Shoto’s faces.

“Yeah, apparently I just have terrible luck with fire” Touya said sardonically, before his expression sobered a bit “I’ll spare you the details, but I basically survived on dumb luck” he gestured to Kurose “they happened to be passing by when the fire broke out, and when they heard someone was trapped on the roof they ran into the building, without their costume, and got me out of there.”

Fuyumi turned to Kurose “that was incredibly brave of you, *thank you.*” Natsuo nodded in agreement.

Kurose started to say something but Aizawa put his hand over their mouth “damn it Anan, just accept the praise.”

Touya rolled his eyes fondly “anyways I was in the hospital for a few days, which was when Izuku and Aizawa decided to help me whether I liked it or not.”

Aizawa raised an eyebrow “if I remember correctly, *you* were the one who asked *us* for help.”

Touya glared at him, “shut up and let me finish talking” he snapped, although there was no real malice in his voice, it was more like the tone a child would use when their parent embarrasses them in front of their friends. He shook his head “*anway*. They helped me find a new apartment, and I somehow got roped into this chaotic mess of a family.” Touya smiled softly at Kurose, Aizawa and Izuku.

“The wildest part is that we didn’t even know he was Todoroki Touya until like, two weeks ago” Kurose added.

Shoto frowned “how? I mean, he looks like himself.”

“Actually I usually dye my hair black, it’s white today because I wanted you three to recognize me.” Touya ran a hand through his hair as he spoke “it just so happened that Kurose and their wife happened to visit me when my hair wasn’t dyed. Kurose figured me out after I mentioned that my face was pretty well known.”

“So that’s when you told them everything,” Natsuo guessed. Touya nodded, and started to explain more when Fuyumi interrupted him.

“As much as I would like to know more as well, we really should get going, father will be home in an hour and you know he’ll ask questions if we’re not there.”

Touya nodded “right, I can catch up with you three later.” He paused, “hey Fuyumi could you hand me your phone?”

Fuyumi looked confused but gave it to him anyways, he quickly typed something before handing it back. It was open to the note app and there was an address and a number typed out.

“The address to my apartment and my number, if you want to visit,” Touya explained.

Fuyumi stared at the screen for a bit before nodding and putting her phone away. “We’ll visit as soon as we can, you still have a *lot* of explaining to do.” She smiled.

Touya hugged Natsuo and Fuyumi tightly, then he turned to Shoto. “Hey, um, I know I wasn’t really around much, and when I was, I was kind of a jerk to you, I’m sorry” it was a painfully awkward apology but Shoto smiled a little bit, which for him was the equivalent of a

beaming grin.

“You don’t really need to apologize, but thank you.”

Touya reached out and ruffled Shoto’s hair, which seemed to startle Shoto, who let out a squeak that caused Touya to start laughing.

After saying their goodbyes they were escorted to the gate by Kurose who also gave Fuyumi their number in case of emergencies. And by the time they got back to the estate Natsuo was exhausted, but that didn’t matter. Today had been more amazing than anything he ever expected. He looked at his siblings, soon, they’d all be free.

Chapter 46: Our Fire

Chapter Summary

Shoto has a very important talk with his brother.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Shoto hated training, even on the best of days, and today seemed to be quite rotten. His father had accused him of shirking his training and lazing about all day because he hadn't been in the training room in accordance with his schedule. This was mostly untrue, Fuyumi had been traying to teach him how to cook, and they'd lost track of the time. But they would be in far greater trouble if Father found out that he had been talking to his siblings such a suspicious amount. So none of them had been able to say anything as their father dragged Shoto off to the training room by the collar of his shirt.

Pain flared along his side as he dodged another burst of flame, the bruises blooming across his torso aching with every movement.

Shoto sent a spike of ice right at his father, which was easily melted away. He could hear Father berating him, trying to goad him into using his flames. He refused, after what happened with Mother, after what she did because of those flames, he was *not* going to let his father win.

After what felt like an eternity, he was finally allowed to leave the training room. His mind focused on a single goal as he limped to Natsuo's room. Fuyumi had left for a job interview a while ago so she couldn't patch him up. And besides, Natsuo planned to study medicine in college, so Shoto was confident that, at the very least, he wouldn't make things any worse.

When he got to the room, Natsuo was lying on his bed, glaring at a pile of homework and twirling a pencil in his hand. He looked up when he heard the door open, cursing their father's name when he saw the state Shoto was in. Shoto closed the door, locking it just in case, while Natsuo rummaged around his drawers to get antiseptic and bandages. Both Fuyumi and Natsuo had a stash of medical supplies hidden in their rooms, a stash that had grown considerably with some help from Kurose and Recovery Girl, so they were always prepared for

situations like this. Shoto struggled to take off his shirt, it stuck to the places where his skin had broken and started bleeding. Natsuo started to apply the antiseptic on the cuts, but Shoto stopped him. “Evidence first.”

Natsuo sighed and pulled out his phone to take photos of the bruises and gashes running across his torso and arms. This was how they’d been documenting any abuse that happened, photographing injuries, audio recording arguments, even taking videos if they could get away with it. Then they’d send the evidence to Kurose for safe keeping before deleting it from their own phones so that Father would never find any of it, even on accident. After the necessary photos were taken, Natsuo started patching him up, Shoto winced at the sting of the antiseptic but stayed quiet. They put plasters on the smaller cuts and bandages where necessary. Once the wounds were dealt with, Natsuo put his hand over where the bruises had formed and used his quirk like a makeshift ice pack to reduce the swelling.

Shoto sighed once they were done, he was exhausted, he wanted nothing more than to take a nap, but judging by the mood that Father was in, he wasn’t about to get any peace. Natsuo looked at him worriedly, he took out his phone and called someone.

The ringing stopped as whoever it was answered. “Hey” Natsuo whispered, Shoto couldn’t hear the other half of the conversation.

“Yeah we’re fine, but Enji’s being, well, you know” Natsuo chuckled at whatever the response was “right, so do you mind if we come over for a few hours?” Natsuo asked, Shoto perked up at that, recognizing who he’d called.

“No, he won’t notice, he’ll leave for patrol in like, twenty minutes, we’ll leave the house then” Natsuo paused “Yumi’s not coming, she’s in an interview, I’ll call her when it’s over and let her know where we are.”

Natsuo ended the call and looked at Shoto “alright, you know where we’re going, I’ll let you know when Enji goes away.”

Shoto nodded and snuck back to his room to wait for Father to leave, he flopped onto his bed and tried to catch at least a few minutes of sleep.

Sometime later he was woken up by knocking on his door, he yawned as he pulled on a shirt and opened the door. Natsuo grinned at him, “the coast is clear, let’s get going.”

Shoto smiled a little and followed Natsuo as they climbed out of the window to avoid the camera by the front door. They managed to take a bus without Shoto getting recognized and walked the rest of the way to Touya's apartment.

Natsuo knocked on the door and waited.

"Hey" Touya greeted them as he opened the door. Shoto couldn't help but stare, three weeks and he still couldn't quite believe that his oldest brother was standing right in front of him, alive and well. It didn't help that, with the hair dye, Touya didn't really look like himself. Although, his scars were definitely better than they were earlier, Recovery Girl had practically threatened Touya into letting her heal him a bit.

"Hi Tou," Natsuo hugged Touya before going into the apartment.

Shoto attempted to just walk past but was stopped by Touya ruffling his hair, Shoto tried to glare at him, but Touya just laughed "oh please, even Izuku is scarier than that."

Natsuo laughed as Shoto huffed in annoyance at being compared to that, *feral child*. He still wasn't sure what to think about Izuku, a quirkless kid who had somehow become not only a talented vigilante, but also saved his brother. He supposed he owed them somewhat for their part in getting him and his siblings away from Father, but he got the impression that they still only tolerated him for Touya's sake. Not that he could blame them, he was actively ignoring them most of the time, he supposed that was a bit rude, but what else was he supposed to do? They were unpredictable at best and downright irritating at worst.

"So what did our dear old dad do this time?" Touya asked as they all crowded onto the couch.

"He's pissed off that Shoto wasn't training when he was supposed to, so that, and whatever else he's mad about, is now our problem, I don't know." Natsuo threw his hands up in frustration.

"Oh *who on earth* could have seen that coming?" Touya's words were drenched in sarcasm.

"I bet he'll be in an even worse mood later" Shoto grumbled, sinking into the cushions, willing the couch to just swallow him whole.

Touya raised an eyebrow, "oh?" He leaned closer to Shoto, ignoring

Natsuo's indignant squawk as he was squished between them.

"I didn't use any fire in training today."

Touya looked confused "huh? Why not?"

Natsuo sighed "Shoto has been refusing to use his fire since the incident with mum, it's some kind of strike, even though he *needs* to use it or he'll get hypothermia using all that ice."

"I am not using *his* fire, I won't give him the satisfaction."

Touya frowned "normally I'm all for pissing off the old man, but isn't this just putting you in *more* danger?"

Shoto shrugged, "I don't care, I stand by my decision, I can become a hero with just mother's ice, I don't need father's fire."

Touya stared blankly at him for a few seconds, before looking down at his own hands. "No."

Shoto frowned "what do you mean no?"

"I mean it's not Endeavor's fire, it *can't* be." Touya clenched his fists.

"Why not? I got it from him, didn't I? So, it's his fire." Shoto was starting to get irritated, of all people he expected Touya, the one who hated their father most of all, to understand. Natsuo gasped as if he'd just realised something.

"But I also got the quirk gene from him, so if your fire is his, then so is mine." Touya shook his head "no, absolutely not, that man is not getting a*single* part of me, your logic is flawed."

Shoto frowned "but then what who's fire is it?"

Touya opened his hand and let a few embers glow in his palm. "This is *my* fire, and yours is your own as well, it's not his, no part of us belongs to *him*."

Shoto crossed his arms, wincing as the sudden movement pulled at his bandages, "he won't see it that way."

Natsuo scoffed "so? Just because you're not using your fire in front of him, doesn't mean you can't use it at all!"

Shoto looked at the embers in Touya's hand, glowing a soft blue, then

at his own left hand. He held it out in front of him, taking a deep breath, he tried to summon flames just like he summoned his ice.

A column of flame erupted from his palm, almost reaching the ceiling. Both Touya and Natsuo scrambled backwards from the heat. Shoto quickly smothered the fire with his other hand in a panic. He stared at the space where the flames had been, “that, wasn’t supposed to happen.”

Touya shook his head, laughing to himself, “you’re telling me, you should probably train your left side a bit more before you try doing a trick like that.”

Shoto frowned “but I won’t ask father for assistance, it’ll have to be trial and error.”

Natsuo sighed, “*or* you could ask the other person with a flame quirk?” He said, looking expectantly at Touya.

Touya grinned “sure, only, we probably shouldn’t do it inside the apartment.” He looked thoughtful for a bit, before it seemed that he had an idea “I’ll ask Aizawa if we could use one of the training grounds at UA, I know Izuku sometimes trains there on weekends.”

Shoto’s eyes widened “really? You’d be willing to teach me?”

“Why not? I’d love to help out my little brother.” Touya ruffled Shoto’s hair, and Shoto smiled. For once in his life, he’d be looking forward to training.

Chapter End Notes

Future brotherly bonding time =)

So, I've been trying to decide if I want to make Touya a hero or not, so, I thought I'd ask you all what you'd prefer.

Chapter 47: Not so broken dreams.

Chapter Summary

Touya teaches Shoto how to use his fire, and learns something important along the way.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

This was far from the first time Touya had set foot in UA, but it sure felt like it was. Perhaps it was because this was the first time he'd gone anywhere on the campus outside of the main building. Looking around at the giant buildings that housed the training grounds, all surrounded by woods, he thought that it looked rather intimidating. Shoto was a few paces behind him, silently grumbling about the twigs that had gotten caught in his hair after he tripped into a bush. Natsuo and Fuyumi weren't with them today, Natsuo had homework to catch up on, and Fuyumi was simply too busy.

Luckily for them, the building they were looking for wasn't nearly as far away as the full training grounds. It looked about two stories tall and just as grand as everything else in the school. Gym Gamma, a building specifically made so that students could safely experiment with their quirks.

The inside of the building was completely empty, save for a weapon rack and two benches in the corner nearest the door. One of the benches seemed to have been used as a table, two water bottles, two towels and an odd-looking box sat on it. Touya and Shoto left their own water bottles next to the others, dehydration was just another *fun* side effect of using their fire too much, so they came prepared. A little further away Touya saw Ishiyama observing two people sparring with training weapons, he looked up, nodding at the two new arrivals and trying to get the attention of the pair who was sparring. They seemed far too busy trying to trip each other up to notice. Touya recognized Izuku, but couldn't quite place the other one's face, he would certainly remember meeting someone with *that* scar. He stared a little too long at the messy line running up from the person's lower jaw, cutting through his lip and leaving a piece missing before sharply veering over to the bridge of his nose.

Izuku noticed them first, jumping away from the spar to wave hello before blocking a swipe from a practice knife with their staff. The other person also noticed Touya and Shoto and called out to them while dodging Izuku's blows.

"About time y'all showed up, we were getting worried" Takeda's odd manner of speech was instantly recognizable, he put the practice knives back on the rack before addressing the two of them. "Welcome to Gym Gamma, it's built to weather a hell of a lot so don't worry too much about breaking anything" he paused, "of course, me and Ken will be supervising this rodeo, so I don't want to see either of y'all doing anything stupid, got it?"

Touya and Shoto both nodded, a little caught off guard at the Takeda's seriousness, considering she was probably one of the most laid-back heroes in this school. Izuku kept their staff on the ground, "hey, Uncle Kazumi, aren't you forgetting something?"

Takeda paused, "oh, right, Higari asked me to give these to you" she walked over to the bench and picked up the box, handing it to Touya.

"What?" Touya examined the box, it was made of rather sturdy looking metal, with a latch on the top. He opened it to find a pair of black fingerless gloves, or at least that's what they looked like, he wasn't too sure considering that these were much thicker than gloves of this kind should be.

"It's for your quirk" Ishiyama said "so that you don't burn yourself while training."

Takeda nodded "those gloves are made to keep your skin cool, I won't bore you with the exact explanation but it involves using thermally conductive material and a bunch of little tubes."

Touya put on the gloves, they were comfortable enough, but that wasn't the important part. He held out his hand and let his flames burst from his skin, the normal sensation of burning was absent. The gloves themselves didn't seem to be getting damaged either. Touya examined his hand in awe.

Takeda chuckled at the expression on Touya's face "well it's good to know you like them, but you've still got to be careful, Higari only figured out how to make these withstand around an hour of your flames before they need to cool down again, so don't overdo it."

"I'll be careful, besides, I'm only here to help Shoto, so I won't be

using my fire *that* much" Touya smiled as he dragged Shoto towards the middle of the building, followed closely by Izuku and their notebook. Ishiyama slightly raised a circular part of the floor to denote the bounds of the training area. And Takeda stood a few feet awa with a fire extinguisher.

"So, where do I start?" Shoto asked, flexing his left hand.

Touya let a fire light on his palm "well, it's a lot easier to grow a flame than it is to control it, so first you need to learn how to keep your flames small, that way when you won't lose control when you get more powerful." Touya diminished the flame in his palm until it looked more like a candlelight, "try that."

Shoto extended his hand, palm facing upwards, Touya backed away slightly, remembering last week's incident. A column of flame burst out of Shoto's palm like a wildfire, expanding to the bounds of the circle. Izuku jumped away, clutching their notebook. Takeda had the extinguisher pointed at the flames. Ishiyama put up a wall between himself and the fire. Shoto panicked and smothered the flame with his other hand like last time.

"Okay," Touya was very glad there wasn't anything flammable around, "let's try that again, but this time, instead of extinguishing the fire, just, think about making it smaller." He lit another flame in his hand, changing its size as easy as breathing. "I like to imagine it like a stove, just turn the dial and the flames go down."

Shoto nodded "alright" he took a deep breath and held out his hand again. A second ticked by with nothing happening.

A more manageable flame flickered to life in Shoto's palm, still bigger than was ideal, but it wasn't in danger of scorching anyone in a three-foot radius. "That's much better" Touya walked a little closer "now let's try and get it a little smaller." Shoto tried again, leading to another set of flames bursting from his hand and almost burning everyone, who all backed *several* feet away. Touya sighed as he quickly put out the flames that had caught onto his jeans, it seemed they was going to be here for a while.

In the end it took close to an hour for Shoto to consistently be able to summon flames only the size of his hand. But it was progress.

Shoto experimented a little more with just how much he could control his fire. It turned out the answer was not much at all, in frustration, he started trying to copy what Touya was doing and make his fire

flare out around himself.

“Why on earth isn’t this *working*?” Shoto huffed and dropped his hands as yet another scorch mark marred the floor, embers flickering in and out of life on his arm.

Takeda shook his head “alright, I think that’s enough, you’re just barkin’ up a knot now, better you quit beating the devil ‘round the stump and actually practice something useful instead of giving a trick like that a lick and a promise.” He spoke sternly, clearly trying to get a point across.

Touya, Izuku and Ishiyama all nodded in agreement while Shoto just stared at them in complete confusion “I’m sorry, did you *actually understand* whatever that was?”

Touya paused as the realisation that he *did*, in fact, understand that sunk in. He turned and glared at Takeda who was holding back laughter, “damn, sorry, I swear I didn’t mean to confuse anyone.”

Touya pinched the bridge of his nose “don’t take that as an excuse to do that more often, got it? You were obnoxious enough when I *couldn’t* speak cowboy.”

Izuku shook their head, a smirk on their lips, “and she got another one.”

Shoto huffed “whatever, I suppose I’ll get it eventually.” He looked around at the charred evidence of his failed attempts “hey Touya?”

“What?”

“Where *did* you learn how to do that? I know father never would have taught you something so, *showy*.”

Touya tapped his arm “well, it’s just something I taught myself back when I used to sneak out and train at Sekoto Peak, it was just fun to test myself like that. I think I was actually about your age when I finally figured the damn thing out.”

Shoto tilted his head “did you learn any other tricks?”

Touya shrugged “a few, but none that I could repeat now that I’m so out of practice.”

Izuku frowned “you haven’t practiced with your fire *at all* since you

ran away?"

"I mean, at first, but after I turned fifteen there wasn't really a reason."

"Why the hell would you just quit?" Izuku asked incredulously.

Touya shook his head "the point of training was to become a hero and prove Endeavor wrong for abandoning me, after I turned fifteen, well, I was past the age to get into a hero school, so what's the point?"

"That's not the only way to become a hero" Ishiyama said offhandedly. Both Touya and Shoto turned to look at him incredulously while the other two seemed completely unfazed.

"It isn't?" Shoto asked curiously.

"Well, there is an option that allows people of any age to try and become a hero, but it's insanely difficult, so nobody really tries." Ishiyama shrugged "heck, if you still wanted to be a hero you could always try it."

"What is it?" Touya asked.

Ishiyama started to explain but Takeda interrupted "I don't think they want to hear the bureaucracy of it all Ken." She playfully, and *very* softly, punched Ishiyama in the shoulder, because Touya was sure that *actually* punching Ishiyama would have broken her hand. "Listen up button" she threw her arm over his shoulder, "first you've got to get recommended for the thing, which is tough enough. But then it's a series of absolutely *brutal* tests, both pen and paper as well as practical, only around ten percent of people pass. And *then*, you're basically allowed a provisional license, which means that all your missions will be accompanied by an established pro hero until you prove yourself to be capable of handling things on your own. Not many people are willing to go through all that, but it's there." She looked pointedly at Touya, clearly asking if he'd take the risk.

Touya thought about it for a while, on one hand, he'd actually be able to achieve the dream he'd long since given up on. On the other, it sounded like an actual nightmare to go through, not to mention, "how many people would know that I was doing this?"

"It would go on the commission records, but those aren't available to any heroes, Endeavor wouldn't find a thing" Ishiyama said.

Touya tapped his arm in thought. Takeda jumped into the conversation “besides, you could always just start *after* we finish up the investigation, if you want to of course.”

“I mean, yeah” Touya nodded, then, more confidently, “I *do* want to do this, or at least *try*, if I fail then I fail, but at least I could say I gave it my best.”

Izuku huffed, frowning, “so we’re letting *him* do the stupidly difficult path that lets someone be a hero without going through a hero school.”

Ishiyama sighed “you *know* why we won’t let you try Izuku, you’re a literal child.”

Izuku giggled, immediately dropping the façade, “yeah I know, I’m just joking. Seriously though, I think, if you tried your best, you could totally do it!”

Touya laughed “I don’t know why you’re so confident, but I think there’s one person’s opinion I want to get first,” he said, turning around.

“What do *you* think Shoto?”

Shoto looked taken aback “you’re asking *me*?”

“Yeah, if I’m doing this, it’s going to be with your approval or not at all” Touya smiled at his little brother.

“But, but what about Natsuo, or Fuyumi? Don’t you want their approval?”

Touya shrugged “it would be nice, but I’d do it anyways, you on the other hand, you know *exactly* what becoming a hero would mean to me, because it means the same thing to you. So, do I have your permission?”

The shock on Shoto’s face gave way to understanding, then a soft, yet determined smile.

“Absolutely. Let us both show the world, and our father, that we *refuse* be defined by their expectations.”

Chapter End Notes

I love making up entire goddamn systems of due process in order

to figure out a reasonable excuse as to why Touya could be a hero. *(I'm being so sarcastic)*

On the other hand, yay!! Hero Touya! So many possibilities.

Cowboy translation because Snipe is a menace to everyone's sanity:
Barkin' at a Knot – Doing something useless; wasting your time, trying something impossible.
Beat the Devil around the Stump – To evade responsibility or a difficult task.
A Lick and a Promise – To do a haphazard job.

Chapter 48: Talking to Mum.

Chapter Summary

Ryo, Anan and Nemuri visit Rei to have a little chat.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Ryo fiddled with the jacket he was wearing as the train sped along. Nemuri and Anan sat beside him, wearing very different expressions, Anan's face was grim at best while Nemuri looked as if this was just a regular old day. She was likely feeling just as unsettled as him and Anan, but she was a very good actor. It didn't help that this was far from the fastest way they could have gotten to their destination, but it was the most inconspicuous.

It hadn't taken long for Nedzu to track down the facility where Todoroki Rei was being held, Fujitani Hospital, it was a reputable place with no history of malpractice, Ryo could vouch for that as knew some of the staff personally. A team of three had been put together to see if they could find out anything about the place and see if Todoroki Rei had any information that they could use, and perhaps assure her of her children's safety. Ryo was the obvious first choice, he had the qualifications and experience to be able to talk to Todoroki Rei without causing any more harm, and after that it was a process of elimination. Sekijiro obviously volunteered, however, as much as Ryo appreciated his husband's support, it was immediately shut down, considering its history with mental institutions. Hizashi, Shouta, and Kazumi backed out before even being asked, not that anyone would have asked them. Higari was far from the most compassionate person present and would be of no help in any other capacity, so xe was out. Anan and Nemuri weren't necessarily *ideal*, Ryo would have preferred to just take Ken along with him, since he was the only person in the room who *didn't* have any issues that might cause some complications. But him and Hirohito were swamped with work that they couldn't just ditch for the sake of this mission.

The three of them walked from the station to the hospital in silence, none of them really wanting to break the tension. Ryo could hear Nemuri whispering reassurances to herself under her breath, and Anan was staring at their phone, at a picture. It must have been taken at Touya's apartment, it was of the four siblings, Shoto was holding a

comic book up in the air, sitting on Touya's shoulders as the two of them ran grinning from a playfully irritated Natsuo, meanwhile Fuyumi was falling off the couch in laughter. It had taken a while to convince the siblings to try therapy, and even more difficult to co-ordinate their schedules so that Endeavour wouldn't notice, but it was a start. And soon, Endeavour wouldn't even be a factor, Ryo, Nemuri, Anan, and the rest of their family would make *damn* sure of that.

Ryo greeted the man at the front desk with a friendly nod while Nemuri informed him that they were here to visit Todoroki Rei. The man was skeptical, after all, they were clearly not related to her, he asked Nemuri why they were here, she smiled, the rehearsed answer on the tip of her tongue.

"What's going on here?" A woman with golden skin walked up to them, one of the nurses, she stared firmly at the three of them, sizing them up, then her eyes landed on Ryo, "Inui? Oh, that's right, you're here to see Todoroki." She waved a hand at the man, "they called ahead, don't worry about it Akai." She nodded towards one of the hallways and started walking.

Ryo walked beside her, beckoning the other two to follow "it's certainly a surprise to see you here Kaneko." He said, regarding her briefly, "I thought you worked with younger patients?"

Kaneko sighed "yeah, but let me tell you, we've been busy as bees around here, and the manager had me transferred to help with the workload."

Nemuri butted in "so you two know each other? Or do you *know* each other?" She asked, waggling her eyebrows, Ryo groaned, face going red with embarrassment as he realised what she was implying, Kaneko looked confused.

"Wha- oh, *ohh*, no, never happened" Kaneko giggled "I think that husband of his would rip me to shreds if I tried. We were roommates in university and kept in touch."

She stopped outside one of the doors, knocking on it and then opening the door and stepping inside, letting them in.

"Todoroki? Your visitors are here." Ryo and Anan went into the room, while Nemuri stayed outside to try and get as much information as she legally could from Kaneko.

Todoroki Rei sat on the edge of the bed, she looked tired, the dark

circles under her eyes tinged red from crying. She gave them all a watery smile “you, wanted to speak with me?” She asked, her voice was quiet, soft, and a little scared.

Anan subtly looked at Ryo, asking him to take the lead, they might be the more approachable looking one, but he was less likely to slip up. “Yes, we just wanted to talk to you, and ask a few questions.”

“About my family I’m guessing?” If it was possible, Todoroki seemed to get even more exhausted.

“Not many questions, and if you do not wish to answer any of them we won’t force you” Ryo assured, “but yes, about your family, but why don’t we start with introductions? My name is Inui Ryo.”

“And I’m Kurose Anan.”

Todoroki nodded “it is nice to meet you, now, what did you want to know?”

Ryo had been trying to figure out the best way to approach this, from what he’s seen, Todoroki’s mental state was a lot more intact than he had expected, but he still wanted to be careful, since he didn’t know where the line was. He sighed “I’ll be honest here, we wanted to ask you about the details of your marriage.”

She sat up a bit straighter “my, marriage? To Enji? Don’t you want to ask about my children? Perhaps what caused me to, do what I did?” She seemed genuinely confused.

Ryo shook his head “no, we don’t, we just want to know about the marriage.”

Todoroki shrugged, sadness clouding her eyes, “we were in love, we got married, what more is there to say?”

“In love? Truly? Or was there more to it?”

Todoroki blinked at him, “I’m sure of it.”

“No under the table dealings? No, *other reason*, that he married you?” Maybe Ryo was pushing his luck here, but this information was vital, without knowing if and where the proof could possibly exist, then searching for it would be close to impossible.

“Why would you suggest such a thing?” Todoroki eyed them

suspiciously “there was no deal with my family, and what could someone as powerful as him possibly want from a poor girl like me?”

Ryo had to give it to her, even in the state she was in, the lines were perfectly rehearsed and said without faltering, it would have fooled him if he didn’t already know half of the truth. “Now, you don’t have to answer this, because I already know the answer, but would it be because of your quirk?”

Todoroki’s eyes widened “what, no, you couldn’t possibly know that.” Her breathing quickened and her eyes darted around, *shit*, that was the exact reaction he'd been trying to avoid, Ryo slowly held up his hands in a placating gesture.

“It’s alright, we can explain, just, take a deep breath, okay?” He softened his voice, like the tone he used with children, and he often found that children and scared adults were not much different.

Todoroki took a few breaths, following as Ryo counted out a breathing pattern. “How?” Her voice trembled, even quieter than earlier.

“Well” Ryo sighed “we were told by your children.”

“My babies?” Todoroki’s eyes started to water “are they alright?”

Anan nodded, “yes ma’am, they’re doing well, I have some pictures if you’d like to see.” They went through their phone to the album dedicated to photos of the siblings.

Todoroki shook her head “I, I don’t know, I wish I could, at least my daughter, but I fear, I don’t know what would happen with either of my sons.”

Anan smiled “I do have a few of Fuyumi, without the boys.”

Todoroki looked hopeful “may I see her, *please*?” She practically begged.

“Of course!” Anan scrolled down to the first picture of Fuyumi they could find, it was her seated cross-legged under a tree, laughing while Nemuri gossiped and braided small flowers into her hair. “This was last week, my wife insisted on taking her somewhere nice to relax since she was studying so much.”

Todoroki stared at the image for quite a while, before she started crying. Ryo and Anan exchanged worried looks and started trying to

calm her down, but Todoroki shook her head. “I haven’t seen my little girl so happy in years,” she said smiling.

Anan showed her a few more photos of Fuyumi, telling her about the different occasions when the pictures had been taken, carefully leaving out any mentions of Touya of course. Todoroki had tears running down her face and a soft smile the entire time.

“Thank you” she eventually said “for taking care of my babies.”

“No need to thank me, they are wonderful children Todoroki.”

“Please, just call me Rei, both of you.”

Anan shared a glance with Ryo who nodded, they smiled “then you can call us Anan and Ryo.”

Rei sighed “now, about my marriage, yes, it was a quirk marriage, Enji made a deal with my parents. Enough money to pay off our debts and live comfortably for at *least* two decades, in exchange for my hand in marriage. They were reluctant of course, but we were very poor, and he didn’t seem all that bad, at the time.”

“Is there any chance there was some documentation? Anything at all? Paperwork, a cheque?” Anan pleaded, hoping that there was *something*.

Rei shook her head “I’m sorry, it was all done under the table, no contract, and the money was paid in cash. In fact, it was such a large sum that it had to paid in fractions over three months so as not to rouse suspicion. Although I’m afraid it’s been so long that I’ve forgotten the exact amount.”

“And nobody else knew about it? Surely Endeavor couldn’t have kept such a secret from *everyone*?” Anan reasoned.

Rei faltered “I, am not sure, I know that my parents never told anyone, but…”

“But?” Anan pressed.

Rei sighed “shortly after my oldest son, Touya, got his quirk, someone showed up, said they were from the Commission, Enji seemed to be expecting them, and they seemed to know, details, that they shouldn’t have.”

Ryo felt a growl build in his throat, but he clamped his mouth shut, he didn't want to scare Rei. *"The HPSC knew?"* Anan asked, whispering as if afraid of being overheard.

Rei shrugged "well, I suspect they had a hand in the coverup, like you said Enji alone could not have kept such a thing a secret for this long, but, I don't think this was normal." *Of course* the HPSC was involved, why *wouldn't* it be? Ryo knew that all of them had *some* hope that the HPSC, for all that none of them trusted it, would be unwilling to turn a blind eye to something as unethical as this. But that didn't mean he was surprised to be proven wrong.

"Not normal, how?"

"They weren't wearing the standard Commission uniform, and they talked about some kind of, *program*." Rei sighed "Enji asked me to leave the room after that, but I did hear a bit of arguing."

"Do you remember what they *were* wearing? What they looked like? A quirk?" Anan asked.

Rei shook her head "no, I'm sorry, it was so long ago, I can only remember how odd the whole situation was."

Anan sighed in frustration, but Ryo put a hand on their shoulder "it *is* still a lead" he reminded them, then he turned to Rei "thank you, for everything."

Rei smiled at the two of them "no, thank *you* for helping my children, you're doing what I was never strong enough to."

Ryo shook his head "I wouldn't blame yourself so harshly Rei, you were just as much under his thumb as your children were." And it was true, he'd seen cases before, of children and parents who were stuck in the same situation, and the parents always blamed themselves, it was understandable, but sometimes there wasn't much you could do.

"Still, thank you."

Anan smiled as Ryo and them turned to leave "no problem."

"Wait" Rei called just as they were leaving "just, one thing." Ryo tilted his head to show he was listening as she continued "could you tell my babies that, I'm sorry that I couldn't stop them from being hurt, and that," she took a deep breath "that I love them no matter what?

“We’ll let them know” Ryo assured her.

They met with Nemuri and Kaneko in the hallway, Nemuri had apparently gotten everything she could out of Kaneko and they were now exchanging embarrassing stories about Ryo. Something only Kaneko had the decency to look ashamed about. After saying their goodbyes to her the three of them left, waiting until they were at Nemuri and Anan’s apartment before they discussed their findings.

Nemuri sighed “I tried, but all I found out is that she’s been getting a lot better since she was first admitted.”

“That’s alright, because we learned a bunch, and, that our main target for the investigation is going to be the *HPSC*.

Nemuri groaned “I can’t say I’m all that shocked, but you’ve *got* to be kidding me, we can’t investigate the fucking *Commission!*”

Anan shrugged helplessly “it’s *literally* our only lead, besides, if anyone could figure out how to do it, it’s Nedzu.”

Nemuri chuckled “let’s be real, the rat bastard’s just been waiting for an excuse.”

Ryo nodded in agreement, whatever happened now, was up to Nedzu, whoever he picked to help him, and a *whole lot of luck*.

Chapter End Notes

> Rei is such an interesting character to write, but hopefully I did alright.

Chapter 49: Breaking and Entering

Chapter Summary

> In order to find what they need to take down Endeavour, a team is sent into the HPSC's main building.

Chapter Notes

> Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

UA was silent, the school year was over, and students were at home with their families. But there were still people in the building, four of whom were gathered in the principal's office, which, with the blueprints laid out over the desk, various contingencies scribbled on a whiteboard, and list upon list of details on security systems and staff rotations, looked more like something out of a spy movie. Shouta took a look around the grim room, this was it, they were going to break into the HPSC, an insane risk, and nothing short of idiotic. But the firewalls around their digital records were comparable to UA's own security. It was too tight to be bypassed without triggering at *least* one alarm, and then they'd be locked out without access to the information. However, the security around the camera systems was a bit more relaxed, comparatively speaking, it still took the combined forces of Nedzu and Higari three days to make a backdoor into the systems without detection. But at least it was *possible*.

It was Shouta, Hizashi, and Sekijiro, standing around Nedzu's desk as he dug more documents out of the drawers, laying out everything for the plan. Everyone else was gathered in the teacher's lounge, any of the staff that weren't busy had shown up, the Iida brothers and Izuku were obviously there, as well as the Todoroki siblings, who had been brought here in case things went awry and they needed to be protected.

"I believe we're all familiar with the plan by now?" Nedzu asked, a last confirmation before they were sent on this insane task. They knew the plan by heart by now, but it was still a good idea to go over it one last time before committing to this. Hizashi would play distraction while the two underground heroes snuck into the building, found whatever information they needed, and got the hell out before anyone even knew they were there. Nedzu would be on comms and

monitoring the camera system, keeping an eye on anyone who could possibly throw a wrench in their plans as well as covering their tracks if need be. They'd be recording the information by way of a tiny camera placed on each of them. And with that, they set off.

They stopped by the teacher's lounge on their way out and were greeted by chaos as usual. The second they opened the door Izuku leapt behind them, climbing onto Sekijiro's shoulder, sticking their tongue out at an annoyed Shoto who was being held back by his sister. Hizashi sighed "what the hell is going on here?" He looked at the others in the room who all seemed to be amused.

"Don't worry about it" Touya said, barely holding back laughter.

"Izuku thinks they can beat me in a fight" Shoto huffed, "I said we could *test* that."

"I never said that!" Izuku complained, hopping down, "I said I *did* beat you in a fight."

"Punching me when I least expected it doesn't count, it isn't a fair fight" Shoto stomped his foot.

Izuku looked at Shouta, eyes bright, Shouta grinned, recognizing what they wanted "hey Izuku? What's the first rule of combat?"

"There's no such thing as a fair fight" Izuku answered, grinning.

"Damn right there isn't" he ruffled their hair.

Shoto pouted "that can't be true."

Sekijiro laughed, "nah, they're right, one side always has an advantage in a fight, no matter how small."

Shouta smirked "did you just admit that I'm right about something?"

Sekijiro gave him a fake scowl, shoving him, "in your dreams! I was talking about Izuku."

"Are you sure about that?" Shouta elbowed it, getting his arm grabbed in return, "come on, you could just say it for once."

"Aww, you think my opinion matters that much?" It playfully mocked him. Both of them had completely given up on acting like they were actually arguing, instead grinning like little kids as they pushed each other around.

Tensei cleared his throat “not to interrupt, but shouldn’t you three get going?”

“Right, come on you dumbasses,” Hizashi grabbed the other two and dragged them out of the door, calling out to the others as he left “we’ll see you all when we bring back the info!”

The main building of The Commission was split into several departments, most were useful, and some were rather pointless, like the one that officially handled missions for underground heroes. In reality, most underground and twilight heroes used their own network of meeting places and informants they had established to co-ordinate missions or relay information to each other, but The Commission liked to pretend like they had a complete grip on that area of heroics like they did with the others. Hizashi went through the front doors while Shouta and Sekijiro dropped from the rooftop of the neighbouring building, entering through the fire escape door as Nedzu informed them he was looping the camera footage just long enough for them to get into one of the blind spots.

Now they were in a hallway, not a long one, but still not a good place to try sneaking around. They had to be very careful about the physical security wandering around, Shouta looked around, they had exactly five places in the entire building that would be hidden from both eyesight and the cameras, and only two of them were in the area they suspected the information to be stored. They needed to get to one of them fast. The two of them carefully and silently moved down the hallway, staying in the surprising number of camera blind spots, keeping an ear out for anyone who would turn the corner.

“The only safe area near you is the room through the first door past the corner, but I don’t know what’s in there, given the lack of cameras, and the blueprints for this entire set of rooms appears to be, unlabelled.” Nedzu’s squeaky voice rang through their comms.

They shared a look, it was risky, but it would give them time, and it could be the room that they were looking for. Shouta peeked around the corner, there was surprisingly nobody down the entire stretch of hallway, weird, but they’d have to pass by a camera’s view, Nedzu could cover that, but the more they did it the more likely someone was going to notice before they could get the job done. And Shouta suspected that if The Commission went through the lengths of having this entire area completely stricken from any accessible records, then there was a good chance that the door was locked. Nedzu would just have to give them enough time to crack it. Shouta stood watch while

Sekijiro, who had way more skill with lockpicking than he did, turned some blood into solid lockpicks and got to work. It took only a minute to get the lock open, Shouta didn't even *hear* anyone in that time. The two quickly opened the door, shut it behind them and breathed silent sighs of relief.

Sekijiro nudged Shouta, who turned to look at it. "That was a stupidly basic lock," it seemed concerned. Shouta frowned, he thought that was a bit quick, but he just thought Sekijiro got lucky. If the lock was so simple, why bother having such high security on everything else? Neither of them believed for a second that the HPSC was being careless. Did they have the wrong room? They had already been on their guard, but after years of experience, this was setting off so many alarm bells in their minds. But they had already gotten this far, and really, if they turned around now they were just as likely to get caught.

They were surrounded by file cabinets, and each cabinet had letters on them, with each drawer corresponding to another letter. Shouta opened the closest one carefully, it had two files in it, each one marked with initials, the first one matching the cabinet and the second matching the drawer. Another thing was that each file was marked with a big red, **FALIURE** stamp. They opened one, inside was a picture of a young child, the date, their name, height, age and several other details were given, followed by detailed documentation of the child's quirk. The rest of the file was a single page progress report, Shouta read the first sentence and bile crept to his throat, the child was referred to as *'The Subject'*, he looked over and saw pure rage on Sekijiro's face, whatever this was, it didn't sound the least bit ethical. The next few sentences simply stated how the child responded to a series of tests, none of which were described and simply labelled. Endurance, strength, intelligence, and obedience. The notes seemed to consistently praise the subject, until they got to the obedience test, which noted that *'despite every measure taken, The Subject refused to carry out the final task, it is unfortunate, but it can be corrected.'* Shouta *really* didn't like the use of the word 'corrected' there, it conjured quite a few ideas, and memories, to his mind, none of which he liked. Besides, judging by the marking on the front, he was willing to bet those corrections didn't do much either. He move to grab another file, but Sekijiro was still staring at the last sentence, the colour drained from its face, Shouta checked again, and felt his stomach drop.

'The Subject's mind was unable to withstand the corrective measures, leaving it unresponsive to any commands. Despite our efforts, The Subject could not be returned to a more stable mental state and will be euthanized.'

What. The. Fuck.

This was a kid, who was seven years old according to their file, they would have been *forty-three* in the present if the date on the file was anything to go by, and they were killed for not being able to suffer through what was probably torture. Shouta felt rage burning through his entire body, this was deeply, *deeply* fucked up. He looked at the other file, also labelled with the same failure stamp, then at the number of drawers on the cabinet, and the number of cabinets in the room, the implications made him want to throw up.

He felt a hand on his shoulder, Sekijiro looked like he was ready to tear apart everyone who enabled this, 'program' and Shouta would gladly help him. They had specific information to find, but...

They shared a determined look, no, documenting this was *far* more important, Nedzu was getting a live feed of this after all, even if the cameras were destroyed, even if they got caught, the commission wouldn't be able to deny it. They searched through any file they could quickly get through, each one horribly disturbing, sure, there were some subjects who had been let go, but those were the youngest who would be irreparably traumatized and unable to tell anyone, and others, mostly the older ones, committed suicide to escape. The dates on the files stretched back as far as fifty years ago, which was a horrifying thought, that this could have gone for so long without anyone noticing.

They found Touya's file, but it was by far the shortest, stating that they would have taken him at the age of fifteen, in accordance to the agreement made with Endeavour, if he hadn't died.

They also found a smaller cabinet, one that only had labels on two of the drawers, A-M and N-Z, the first one had two files formatted differently, they lacked the failure stamp, and, in addition to everything else, these two children each had a codename attached. Shouta and Sekijiro shared a look, both shocked, the codenames were those of two well-known heroes from recent history. Both of them were taught about as examples of extremely competent and successful heroes. They were the successes, the ones who suffered and lived, and who knows what the commission made them for. The last drawer had a single file in it, with the initials *T.K.*

Shouta was knocked to the ground, something sharp pressed to his neck. He heard Sekijiro fall beside him. His vision was spinning as a small figure stood over them, hand to their ear. Who was this, and

how did they sneak up on two experienced underground heroes?

“Should I kill them?” The figure spoke, tone flat, like they wouldn’t care either way. The figure sighed at whatever answer was given, they bent down speaking to Shouta and Sekijiro directly “lucky, you and your accomplice will be spared.” Accomplice? They had Hizashi as well?

Shouta didn’t get to think on that further as the last thing he saw before being knocked out, was a pair of *bright, red, wings.*

Chapter End Notes

>:3

Chapter 50: Rescue Mission.

Chapter Summary

With their family in danger, Izuku takes matters into their own hands.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku ignored Tenya's indignant squawking as they lifted him over their shoulder, they had a point to prove, besides it wasn't like any of the adults in the room were stopping them, actually, they could see Uncle Tensei and Bibi Anan sneaking pictures of the chaos. They smirked at Shoto who just grinned, "that's easy."

Shoto snatched Tenya from Izuku, matching their enthusiasm. Tenya tried to wriggle out of his predicament with little success "this feels completely unnecessary to proving your point Izuku."

"If Aunt Nemuri says we can't spar in here, then we need to figure out who is stronger this way!" Izuku explained for the fifth time.

"Yes I understand *that* but why did it have to be *me*?" Tenya whined, still being held over Shoto's shoulder like a wriggly sack.

"Well I doubt that either of us could lift anyone else here" Shoto pointed out, "you will have to simply, 'deal with it'."

Touya was in the corner laughing at Tenya's misery "that's still not how you say that, but close enough I guess."

Fuyumi sighed "Touya, quit trying to teach Shoto how to insult people, he's never going to get it and frankly it's completely unnecessary."

"Maybe to you Yumi, but I think it's going great, the kid's hilarious, especially when he fucks up the context," Touya cackled.

"Besides," Natsuo added "even if he doesn't get it, it'll make for one hell of a confusion tactic."

Shoto pouted “I thought I was doing alright.” He turned back to Izuku “well, we can both lift Tenya any way we want, now what?”

Izuku thought for a second, there was no way either of them could get the proper leverage on the others in the room, so, maybe. They grinned mischievously and walked over to Shoto, who had slowly started backing away, still carrying a now terrified Tenya. Izuku grabbed Shoto by the torso and lifted him and Tenya together, although they couldn’t quite lift the pair high enough to balance them properly, so Izuku had to let go after a few seconds or risk falling over.

“Beat that!” Izuku grinned.

Shoto handed Tenya, who had now accepted his fate as a ragdoll, over to Izuku, he then lifted Izuku, although he got about the same result as they did. He huffed and looked around for something else to lift, but was stopped by Uncle Ryo.

“I think we’ve found both of your limits, maybe you two should just relax and wait for the others to return with-”

“Will all available pro heroes please report to my office, immediately” Nedzu’s squeaky voice crackled over the intercoms, interrupting whatever Uncle Ryo was going to say. The four heroes shared a look before practically sprinting out of the room. Izuku moved to leave as well, but Tenya grabbed their arm.

“Nedzu said all pro heroes, if he felt the need to specify then I don’t think he wants us to get involved.”

Izuku looked around the room, the Todorokis looked worried, but they didn’t try to leave, not even Touya. Izuku scoffed, they couldn’t believe that everyone else was just going to sit and wait, but Tenya was right, Nedzu probably didn’t want them involved. But whatever it was couldn’t be good, after all, this wasn’t part of the plan, and that meant that something had gone sideways. Izuku just hoped it was a good kind of sideways.

Well, there was only one way to find out, Izuku darted to the vent access, ignoring Tenya’s lecturing, “I’ll just take a look, that’s all,” they assured him as they crawled into the vents. They quickly made their way to the vent grate over the principal’s office, where they fully expected to be caught. However it seemed that everyone was distracted by a phone call, to *Nedzu’s* phone, which meant that it was either one of the other staff members, Detective Tsukauchi, or a *very*

high up person within hero society.

Everyone was crowding around the desk, the phone lay face up with the speaker on, there wasn't a contact name, just a bunch of numbers, so it was probably the third option. Izuku stilled as the person on the other end spoke.

"If you want them alive, you'll delete the information you have, if you choose to reveal the information however, well, our agent can be quite, *ruthless.* We'll get confirmation that you have, in fact, wiped the information from your systems, then we'll release your employees" Izuku felt their heart trying to beat out of their chest, did the team, get caught? They knew it was a possibility, they weren't naïve enough to think that their family was invincible, Izuku had seen them get hurt too many times to think that. But that didn't make it any less chilling, no wonder Nedzu only wanted the other pros to hear this, he probably didn't want to cause a panic when there was nothing they could do. But wait, Izuku thought for a moment, wasn't this a catch twenty-two?

Nedzu confirmed their suspicions "that's all well and good Madame President, but I'm afraid you have no choice but to let my colleagues live, if you do kill them, I will have no reason to keep the information a secret. Since I would like to guarantee their safety, and in no way trust that you would release them should I wipe the information, it appears we're in a stalemate."

The president of the HPSC herself was the one giving this news? What on earth did the team find? Izuku shook their head and scampered back to the teacher's lounge. They dropped from the vents, landing right next to Shoto, who shrieked in surprise. Everyone's eyes turned to them, quickly turning worried when they saw Izuku's expression.

"It's bad isn't it?" Touya asked.

Izuku nodded "dad, papa, and uncle Sekijiro all got caught, Nedzu's trying to negotiate with the commission president, for their *lives*."

The tension in the room was palpable, their family was in danger, and there was nothing they could do, unless...

"No" Tenya said firmly.

"What? I didn't even say anything!" Izuku exclaimed.

"You don't have to, I know that look in your eyes, it means whatever you're planning is bound to give people grey hairs, specifically me,"

Tenya crossed his arms “I’m not letting you do anything rash.”

“Okay, but think about it, the rest of our family can’t do anything, shouldn’t I at least *try* something?” Izuku said, before digging through their backpack for their Wraith hoodie and mask, thank goodness some of Dad’s paranoia had rubbed off on them. They threw those on, making sure their face was properly covered, and grabbed their trusty bo-staff, securing it on their back.

“We don’t even know *how* they got caught, and whatever it is could catch three pros, what chance does one eleven year old have?” Tenya exclaimed, exasperatedly.

“What about two?”

Tenya and Izuku whirled around to see Shoto looking questioningly at them.

“No, no, *no*” Tenya groaned “Fuyumi, Touya, *please* talk some sense into them,” he pleaded.

Fuyumi nodded “it’s too risky, you could get hurt, and if lives are being threatened, well, you could be killed.”

Touya nodded “Yumi is right, this is incredibly risky for a bunch of kids” Natsuo looked at him weirdly, like he didn’t believe what Touya just said. Touya then grinned “which is why you two are going to need adult supervision.” He dug around in his pockets and pulled out his new thermal regulation gloves that Bibi Higari had upgraded after Touya decided to start training to be a hero, “besides, I’ve been wanting to test out the new gloves for a while.”

Fuyumi and Tenya looked absolutely flabbergasted “Touya!” Fuyumi exclaimed, “you cannot be serious!”

Touya shrugged “knowing Izuku, they’ll just do it anyways, and I don’t think any of us are capable of stopping them, and they could probably sneak Shoto out as well, so I’m not letting either of them leave without their big brother looking out for them.”

Natsuo nodded “seems reasonable, we can stay behind and cover for you if anyone notices” Izuku knew he meant he was going to make sure that Fuyumi and Tenya didn’t snitch.

“Wait.” Tenya sighed “there needs to be *somebody* to make sure you lot don’t do anything stupider than this, I’ll go.” He looked at Fuyumi

who reluctantly nodded in agreement.

“Like Natsuo said, the two of us won’t tell on you, but I expect you to contact us if *anything* goes wrong so that we can get help.” Fuyumi levelled a stern gaze at them.

Izuku grinned “don’t worry, we’ll let you know the second we need help” they dragged Tenya out of the door while the other two followed behind.

Once they were out of the building, Tenya stopped them “so, do we have a plan?”

Touya and Shoto looked expectantly to Izuku, “well, I thought we could scope out the situation first before making a complete plan, but I do have a plan for finding information, we just look through the windows! If we don’t go inside the actual building, I doubt there’s any security we have to worry about.”

Tenya sighed “I suppose you’re right, but I still don’t like this.”

“Well *you* agreed to tag along” Shoto pointed out, “so don’t start whining now.”

“He’s right, let’s at least see what we’re dealing with before jumping to conclusions about impossibility.”

The four of them took a bus to the station near the HPSC building, then walked the rest of the way, by Izuku’s calculations, they’d spent about half an hour to get there. Instead of going through the front doors, they ducked into an alleyway on the side of the building, if Izuku had to guess, this was probably the same way that Dad and Uncle Sekijiro got in. They climbed the fire escape and checked the windows as the snuck by.

Izuku had to duck out of sight each time a guard looked towards the window, and the other three practically had to crawl to stay undetected the entire time. It seemed that the commission had ramped up their security after the break in, but it all seemed to be concentrated on the middle floors, where you’d already have to pass through multiple checks to get there. Obviously, they didn’t want any random people noticing the commotion, that would just cause issues for everyone involved. But then, why not have the security on the upper floors as well? They were just leaving the fire escape wide open as an entry method.

The four of them sat on the roof, out of sight as they discussed their plan.

“So what do we do?” Shoto asked.

“It looks like the fire escape is our best bet, I’ll see if there’s any guards” Touya suggested.

“But I’m the best at stealth, I should-” Izuku began, but was cut off.

“Nope, I said I was tagging along to look out for you, and that’s exactly what I’m going to do, I’m not putting any of you in danger if I can go instead.” Touya walked over to the edge of the roof, dropping down to the fire escape.

Izuku sighed and looked over the edge of the roof, Touya carefully opened the door to the top floor, looking in, he looked around for a few seconds before just throwing the door open. “It doesn’t look like anyone’s here, this feels weird, if this was how the others got in, you’d think they’d have more people guarding this place.”

Izuku nodded “come back, let’s try not to use the same path, there’s no way the commission *isn’t* expecting a second break in.”

Touya climbed back onto the roof, and the four of them weighed their options, give up and go home, or face the commission and whatever trap they have set. Tenya was very much in favour of giving up and going home, and Izuku was stubbornly insisting that they should at least *try*. But Touya and Shoto pointed out that neither of those options seemed reasonable, either they’d be doing nothing, or getting themselves caught and make things worse for their family.

Eventually Izuku huffed and stood up, “well I don’t see how any course of action we take isn’t going to be stupid, and I’m not going to sit by and lose my family again.”

They started to the edge of the roof when something pulled them back to the group, they were thrown on the ground next to the others, who all had several red feathers circling them. Touya took one look at them before letting his flames flare out, burning the ones surrounding him to a crisp, although not before one of them managed to slash at his cheek.

“Huh, I was *not* expecting that” a voice muttered from behind them, before calling out “you, with the blue fire, surrender peacefully before I dice your little friends.” The feathers moved closer, their soft fibres

straightening out into a blade. Fascinating, this person appeared to have complete control of each feather, to the point where they could forcibly stiffen each one, and perhaps even sharpen it, although Izuku wasn't keen on testing out that last theory.

The four of them carefully turned to look at the mystery person, and they were greeted with someone who looked close to Fuyumi's age, on the shorter side, and wearing what was obviously a costume of some kind, hero or villain, plus the wings, which were the same red as the feathers. Were their feathers detachable? If so, could they still fly? Izuku quickly snapped themself out of their analysis, now was definitely not the time. So, they figured out what, or *who* managed to take out three very competent pro heroes. The only issue being, how were *they* supposed to get away from someone like that?

"Who the fuck are you?" Touya demanded.

"That's classified, but perhaps you can tell me who you are? And why two of you are *definitely* children? Your friend in green is either a child as well or *very* short."

Touya began to answer, but Izuku held up their hands, causing the feathers to close in. "Don't move, unless you want to be stabbed," the mystery person threatened.

Touya scoffed "you want an explanation? They need to sign to give it to you. Let them go, you still have two other hostages."

"Fine," the mystery person scowled, but moved the feathers around Izuku to circle around Tenya and Shoto.

"We're just looking for some people, maybe you know something about them," Izuku accused.

"Eraserhead, Vlad King, and Present Mic? I didn't know Nedzu sent children to do his dirty work."

"First off, I'm not a child" Touya snapped "secondly, I'm not sure the commission can say anything about that, I mean, how old *are* you? You look even younger than me!"

"That's classified, and I'm pretty sure even someone your own age would look younger than you, those scars aren't very flattering," the mystery person raised an eyebrow.

Touya shrugged "eh, you should have seen what they *used* to look

like.”

“*Anyways,* you’re the one who captured the heroes we’re looking for, yes?” Izuku asked.

“And if I am?”

“Why?”

“Why, what?” The mystery person looked confused.

“Why did you do it? Did you not know what they were doing? Or are you trying to protect the commission?” Izuku asked, they knew the answer was probably the second one, but still, this person was clearly young, how could they be so calm about lives being threatened to protect, whatever horrible secrets had been uncovered?

“I was just doing my duty.”

“What’s your duty?” Izuku asked.

“That’s classified, but I can tell you that part of it is protecting the commission,” so the mystery person was definitely a hero, although Izuku couldn’t say they’d heard of someone like this, so maybe they hadn’t debuted yet, or maybe they just worked for the commission and nothing else.

Touya scowled “why on earth would *anybody* want to protect those bastards? I don’t know everything they’ve done, but I do know they helped cover up the crimes upon crimes committed by Endeavor.”

The mystery person raised an eyebrow “the number two hero?” They looked over at Shoto, “oh, you’re Endeavor’s kid, what are you doing here? Did these three kidnap you or something?”

Shoto shook his head “no, what my, I mean, what he said was right, Endeavor has committed many crimes, the heroes you captured were simply looking for evidence of the cover up.”

Izuku had to stop themself from turning around and telling Shoto to *please* shut up before he revealed something he really shouldn’t. They looked at the mystery person, who just stood there, listening.

“The commission wouldn’t do that, not without good reason,” the mystery person grabbed Shoto by the collar, oh great, now they had to deal with *this*.

“And what *exactly* do you count as a good reason to hide the crime of child abuse?” Shoto asked, and Izuku could see a small film of ice creep up his right arm, he was really mad.

The mystery person paused, dropping Shoto. “Child abuse?” They asked, voice turning cold, maybe they did have a chance after all.

Touya moved in front of Shoto protectively “you heard him asshole, now, what kind of hero *are* you, if you’re just going to stand by and help someone get away with that?”

“I have my orders” the person took a step forward, tilting their head up to glare directly at Touya “and *you*, don’t try to play mind games with me.”

Izuku huffed “seems to me like you’re not much of a hero at all, just another villain.”

That seemed to strike a nerve, as the mystery person’s voice grew colder “*I have my orders.* I will not fail my mission because of a bunch of *pathetic* children.”

Pathetic? Izuku saw the other three glance at them in terror, but they couldn’t really care less. “Look at me you bastard, do you want to know what’s truly *pathetic* about this situation? The fact that a so-called hero can’t do the right thing because of some *bullshit* orders. Stand there and *tell* me you’re going to let the number two hero get away with serious crimes or sit down and learn that you’re no *hero*. Because from where I stand, you look like nothing but the commission’s *lap dog*.”

The mystery person bristled “if that’s how you see me, fine, but I owe the commission my life, and I will not allow you to tear it down.”

“You owe them your life?” Tenya asked, “how?”

“That’s classified.”

“Of fucking course it is” Touya grumbled “is *anything* not classified with you?”

“Wouldn’t you like to know” the mystery person replied, smirking.

Touya opened his mouth to say something, but Izuku shook their head, so he just gritted his teeth and glared, they could tell he wanted to roast this person, and frankly, so did they. “You really are just

another villain in disguise, aren't you?"

"I am not a villain, I am just following orders, the commission has its reasons, I am not going to question them." The mystery person said, but Izuku could hear their voice waver for a second, unnoticeable to the average person, but they'd been trained by Nedzu and Uncle Ryo to recognize all kinds of tells.

"I'll ask again, are you going to stand by and help an abuser cover up his actions?" Izuku pressed the point, because if nothing else, they *needed* this person on their side if they were going to do anything.

"That isn't what I'm doing," the mystery person stubbornly insisted "there must be a mistake, the commission would not stand for truly heinous actions."

"Well they do" Shoto said "my siblings and I would have gone to the commission a long time ago if we thought they could be trusted. Why on earth do *you* trust them so much?"

The mystery person faltered "because, no. The reason is classified."

"*God damn it,*" Touya yelled, fire flaring up his arms as he stalked towards the mystery person, "get it through your *thick skull*, the commission *lied*, they don't protect people, they just protect their own interests. And if you're going to be a part of that, then I'm going to *burn* those wings of yours and free the people who are actually trying to do the *right* thing."

The mystery person flared their wings, diverting their feathers to threaten Touya, "the commission can't be selfish, they *do* want to protect people, why else would they train *me*?" They raised their voice, but suddenly, their face dropped and they covered their mouth.

Izuku tilted their head "I'm going to guess that was classified information."

Tenya looked at the mystery person "they, *trained* you?" He looked between the mystery person, Touya, and Shoto, then back at Izuku, wondering if they were thinking the same thing.

"They wanted a weapon." Izuku could hardly believe it, but now it made sense, why they'd help Endeavor, when they were doing the same thing.

"Oh," Shoto's eyes widened "you're like me."

The mystery person turned to him, confused “like, you?”

“My father trained me from a young age with no regard for my actual wishes, he just saw me as a weapon to take the title he failed to, the title of number one hero. It seems to me, that the commission wants something similar with you.” Shoto explained.

The mystery person shook their head “no, I *wanted* to be a hero, I went through those years of training and pain because I *wanted* to. And the president, she treated me like a son! I am nothing like *you*.”

“Pain?” Izuku shook their head “there shouldn’t be pain in training, you don’t *need* to suffer just to be a good hero, whatever the commission did, it wasn’t training.”

The mystery person shook his head “no, stop trying to get in my mind! You won’t trick me!”

“We’re not trying to trick you!” Tenya exclaimed “we can help you!”

“I don’t *need* to be helped!” The mystery person snarled and some feathers flew haphazardly at the group, Tenya dashed away, Izuku managed to dodge, and Touya and Shoto used their quirks to destroy and block the feathers.

“Look, I know you think you can handle it, I did too,” Shoto pleaded “but what the commission is doing is wrong, please, just help us, and then you can decide what to do.”

The mystery person took one look at the group of four, and then directly at Izuku “you seem to be the leader here, correct?”

Izuku was stunned, where on earth did this guy get that idea? They waited for the others to start laughing at the suggestion. But then their friends all nodded in agreement? What? They supposed they could go along with it for now.

The mystery person walked over to them, their hand twitched towards their bo-staff, but they stayed still. “I don’t know what game you and your little team are playing,” he sighed “but if there’s one thing I cannot stand, it’s letting a criminal walk free, so, I will help you, for now.” He bent down to Izuku’s level “*however,* if it turns out that the commission was innocent in this, then I will be *slitting your throats faster than you can react.*”

Izuku nodded “understood loud and clear, now let’s go!” they hopped

over to the fire escape, followed *very* closely by the mystery person and the rest of their team, the five of them climbed through the window and into the top floor.

Touya cleared his throat “so Birdie, which way do we go?”

“*Birdie?*” The mystery person scowled.

“Well, if you’re not going to give us *something* to call you, then I’m gonna call you Birdie” Touya grinned.

“Well, two can play at that game *Ashes*” the mystery person smirked.

“Well unlike *you* I actually *have* a moniker I can tell you, it’s Dabi” Touya put his hands on his hips, leaning forward to grin at the mystery person, “anything to add *Birdie*?”

The mystery person scoffed “I think I like Ashes better, but you can call me Hawks,” he gave a little bow.

“Nah, I’ll stick with Birdie” Touya smirked, well, at least the rest of them had something to call the guy.

“And what about your friends?” Hawks asked, looking at Izuku in particular.

Tenya stepped forward “I’m Iida Tenya, you already know Todoroki Shoto, and that is, Wraith,” he gestured at Izuku.

Hawks nodded “alright then, your friends should be down the hallway, over here, just follow me and we can avoid the cameras.”

They all made their way down the hallway, which was surprisingly quiet, the lack of security wasn’t just around the windows, it was through the entire floor.

“It’s kind of quiet, isn’t it? I mean, with the break in and everything, you would think they’d have far more people searching the place,” Shoto observed.

“Well, the commission doesn’t really trust their security to keep quiet about whatever they keep up here, and I’m all the security they really need.” Hawks stated, following the invisible path of blind spots like he’d done it a thousand times.

“So the commission is keeping something so secret that not even the security is allowed to know what it is, and that doesn’t sound at least

a *little* bit shady to you?" Touya asked incredulously.

"Well when you say it out loud like *that*, kind of" Hawks shrugged "I don't know, it made sense at the time, especially considering the files up here are-" he stopped himself again, glaring at Touya "you *cannot* keep trying to get me to reveal confidential information Ashes."

Touya shrugged "I was just pointing out how weird this shit is, *you're* the one who almost slipped up," he grinned "but if you *do* have something to tell us, now would be a good time, Birdie." He leaned into Hawks' space and got smacked in the face by a wing for it.

"Don't push your luck."

The group made their way down to the next floor, and Hawks held up a wing to stop them "alright, there's going to be some guards at the door to the holding cells, I'll go see if I can get them out of the way." He turned the corner and Izuku could hear a muffled conversation, followed by two thuds, one of Hawks' feathers came back to them, moving like a beckoning hand. Izuku *really* wanted to know how his quirk worked.

They stepped out to see two guards unconscious on the floor and Hawks fishing a keycard out of one of their pockets. He tossed the card to Izuku "that should unlock the cells." He then grabbed a regular key and unlocked the door, stepping inside.

"Oh great, you again," Izuku's eyes widened as they recognized Papa's voice. They rushed into the room, standing face to face with a set of clear walled cells, only three of which had people in them, Dad, Papa and Uncle Sekijiro, restrained with quirk cancelling cuffs, and their belongings set on a shelf out of reach. All three turned to look at them, shock clear on their faces. Izuku glanced at Hawks and subtly tapped their staff, letting their family know that they were currently Wraith.

"Wraith, what the *hell* are you doing here?" Uncle Sekijiro exclaimed "and why isn't the little agent trying to kill you?"

Izuku shrugged "long story, first, let's get you all out of here," they quickly unlocked the cells, letting their family free, they immediately hugged their parents, and then Uncle Sekijiro. Hawks seemed confused at their actions as he pocketed the stuff from the shelf, but didn't have time to ponder it.

They heard the sound of fire crackling as Tenya burst into the room,

“hey everyone, we might want to run, *now*.”

Izuku sprinted out of the room, finding several people in commission uniforms sprinting up the stairs, guns in hand, being held off by bursts of blue fire courtesy of Touya.

They turned to the others, “Dabi, stop using your fire, Shoto, wall of ice, as thick as you can safely make it. Tenya, you and Hawks-”

They were cut off as Hawks flew down to the guards, “hey, guys, I think there’s been a mistake, they’re not trying to hurt anyone, they’re just trying to save people.”

“Hawks,” The guards parted to reveal the commission president herself, “what do you think you’re doing?”

“Madame President!” There was visible relief on Hawks’ face, Izuku did not like where this was going. Papa gestured at the cuffs, and Shoto started trying to break them by heating them up and freezing them while Hawks continued talking, “finally, someone can do something! Endeavour’s been doing some horrible things. We need to stop him!”

The president just shook her head “whatever Endeavor is doing is none of our business, right now what we need to focus on is the threat of an information leak.”

“But-”

“Now, eliminate the intruders.” Izuku *really* didn’t like the sound of that, they just hoped that Hawks could see how twisted this whole situation was.

“And what do you want me to do with the kids?” Hawks asked.

“Didn’t you hear me the first time? Eliminate them.” The president’s voice was steely as she gave the order.

Hawks took a step back “they’re *kids*.”

“And they have dangerous information. We do what we must. And if you can’t, then clearly you need to be retrained.” Several of the guards aimed their guns at Hawks, Izuku glanced at the cuffs, which were barely breaking. They looked at Touya who nodded, Izuku reached for their staff.

“Hey, wait,” a look of panic overtook Hawks’ face “wait, I’m sorry, *please*, we can talk about this.”

“You can apologize after you’ve proven that you won’t disobey orders again.” One of the guards charged forward, an electric hum filled the air as Hawks was tazed. It didn’t last long, only a few seconds before the guard was knocked to the side by Izuku, but Hawks fell unconscious. Touya stood next to Izuku, sending a plume of fire to both injure anyone who pursued them, as well as block their vision, not that that stopped the agents from firing wildly. A wall of ice appeared, blocking most of the bullets, although a few did fly past Izuku, and one managed to graze Touya’s arm. Tenya ran down and dragged Hawks back up the stairs as fast as he could, followed by Izuku and Touya. Shoto had finally finished breaking the cuffs, and Uncle Sekijiro immediately scooped up Hawks so that the group could move at full speed. The guards started to get past the smoke, but Papa used his quirk and managed to knock the first few rows of them back down the stairs.

They all ran back the way they came, Tenya running a bit ahead to check for danger. They all made it out of the fire escape door, and they started to run down the steps, but Shoto made an ice ramp and melted it behind them as they slid down into the alleyway. Dad and Uncle Sekijiro took the front, leading them down a series of alleys until they were sure they’d lost the commission agents.

“Well,” Papa huffed “that was terrifying.”

“You’re telling me!” Touya exclaimed, “I didn’t even know I *could* run that fast!”

“Right,” Uncle Sekijiro started, “I’m going to guess you kids weren’t supposed to be here? And I’m also going to guess you didn’t tell anybody where you were going.”

Izuku shuffled their feet “it was my idea, sorry.”

“Hey, don’t take all the blame, we *did* offer to go with you after all!” Shoto said.

“No matter who’s idea it was, you saved us, so I’d say you kids did a pretty good job,” Dad shook his head “still, I feel like we should contact Nedzu.” He fished his phone from Hawks’ jacket.

“Right,” Touya pulled out his phone, and winced when he saw the number of missed calls, specifically from Bibi Anan, “oh, we’re all in

so much trouble."

Tenya groaned "I told you so! I tried to stop you and you didn't listen!"

Papa laughed "now let's not throw blame around." He looked over at their new friend "but I do have to ask, why do you have the commission agent on your side? No, wait, *how* do you have the commission agent on your side?"

Izuku quickly explained the situation, as well as their suspicions. Dad and Uncle Sekijiro shared a look after they wrapped up the story.

"So," Dad began "you think he's?"

"Yeah, he's got to be the third one" Uncle Sekijiro agreed.

Shoto tilted his head "what are you talking about?"

"You didn't even find out what the information we found was?" Dad shook his head "never mind, it turns out that the commission has been creating child soldiers, from what we've found, there were only three people labelled successes, two of whom are already dead, and the other one, we didn't get to read the file, but I'm assuming. Well, if the commission trained him, he's probably been through a lot."

Izuku stared at the unconscious Hawks, "we can help him, right?"

Papa ruffled their hair "yeah, we can help him." They all noticed a familiar car pull up next to the alley they were hiding in "but first, let's hope that Anan doesn't bite your heads off for this little stunt."

Touya shuddered, "I never wanted to sit through one of their lectures ever again, how is a marshmallow so scary?"

Dad glared at him "oh trust me, that's the least of your worries when we get back to UA," he turned to Izuku, "and by the way, you're grounded."

Izuku just grinned "I figured as much."

Tenya put his head in his hands "Tensei is never going to let me out of his sight again." Shoto gave him a sympathetic pat on the back.

They all managed to cram into the car, Bibi Anan glared at the four children from the driver's seat, lecturing them on their absolute stupidity on the drive back to UA. But Izuku was only half focused on

the lecture, constantly glancing at Hawks, who had been laid across Touya and Papa's laps, they hoped that they'd really be able to help him. But they knew one thing, they might have made an enemy of the commission, but the commission just made an enemy of their family.

Chapter End Notes

Birb acquired!

Also oh my stars this chapter was so long, but I thought it would be mean to leave you all on another cliffhanger.

Chapter 51: Birds of a feather-

Chapter Summary

> Hawks is very confused and heroes are incapable of not being a *little* chaotic.

Chapter Notes

> --- : POV switch
> Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The sounds of concerned chatter nearly drowned out Izuku's own thoughts. In the midst of everything, their little escapade had been temporarily forgotten in favour of Hawks' situation. Namely, trying to decide what they were going to do about him, and how far the commission would go to bring him back. Everyone had gathered in the principal's office after Granny Chiyo had chased them out of the infirmary so that she could deal with Hawks, who was still unconscious. Izuku, Tenya, and Shoto were clustered in the corner, silently awaiting the moment that the others remembered the other issue. Fuyumi and Natsuo sat together, listening to Touya quietly recount the whole ordeal, and occasionally stopping him from messing with the bandage on his cheek where Hawks' feather had cut him.

"Look, considering everything, there's obviously no way we're letting the commission get their hands on this kid again." Papa said after he, Dad, and Uncle Sekijiro had finished explaining everything that had happened. Apparently between the time that they'd been captured and rescued, Hawks had been tasked with interrogating them, both about what they'd found, as well as about why they'd been there in the first place. They'd all kept quiet when asked what exactly that 'interrogation' entailed, Izuku suspected they were trying to protect Hawks from any further animosity.

"That would be for the best," Nedzu agreed, "however, we must consider our next course of action *very* carefully, we might not be able to fully protect him within the boundaries of the law."

"And!? This *entire* investigation is outside the boundaries of the law! We bypassed the commission from the start!" Aunt Nemuri snapped "there's no reason to back down now!"

“Our initial investigation was into Endeavor, I highly doubted that the HPSC would find it a battle worth fighting if we had enough evidence, but this is the HPSC itself we’re talking about here, the president and her inner circle aren’t going to just stand by and let us destroy everything they’ve been working for.” Nedzu was firm in his insistence, and Aunt Nemuri huffed, but backed down, recognizing that she wasn’t going to change his mind.

Uncle Ryo seemed to disagree, as a low growl echoed through the room. He’d been unable to stop growling since they’d explained the situation, something which didn’t happen often, Izuku had only seen it a handful of times themself. Uncle Sekijiro nodded “Ryo’s right, we’ve already pissed off the commission, there isn’t a way forward that *doesn’t* end with them trying to get rid of us.”

Papa fiddled with his shades, “well, they *could* threaten the kids, now that the commission knows that they’re involved.”

Izuku winced, oh yeah, they probably should have thought about that before they went and broke into the commission building. Bibi Anan noticed their group’s collective sheepishness over the matter and sighed. “What you kids did was definitely stupid, and I still stand by my lecture earlier. But the rest of us were debating doing the exact same thing while you lot were sneaking off so we can’t be *too* mad at you. You’re still grounded though, you shouldn’t be putting your lives in danger like that, at least wait until you’re full-fledged heroes before giving us all heart attacks!”

Izuku nodded, their family had been bouncing between praising them for doing a good job and scolding them for even attempting it in the first place. Izuku knew it was just because they were worried, although Touya had definitely gotten a bit more scolding than the rest of them, and Fuyumi and Natsuo had been lightly reprimanded for going along with the whole plan.

“Well, isn’t the answer obvious?” Dad looked up from his spot in the corner, “UA’s not being used right now, and the building has the security to keep the kids safe, we could just keep them here until this all blows over.”

“What about us?” Shoto asked, “surely father will notice if we just disappear?”

“I don’t think letting you go back home is a good idea right now,” Uncle Sekijiro said, “the commission clearly got a good look at all four

of you, and they might not have recognized Touya, but they *definitely* recognized you, and I have no doubts that they'd tell Endeavor."

Shoto moved a bit closer to Izuku, expression morphing into a terror that was mirrored on his siblings' faces. Tenya moved over to press against Shoto, "our family is capable of protecting us, after all, they're heroes, they're not going to let anything happen, right Tensei?".

Uncle Tensei nodded "that's right, we'll figure out how to keep all of you safe, nobody's getting past us without a fight." He gave them all a big smile, just to cheer them up.

Nedzu cleared his throat, instantly bringing all attention back to him as he observed the cameras from his computer. "I will have to contact the others and inform them of the situation, as it is likely that they will be targeted with the rest of us, but I think it would be better for all of you to go do something else while I double check our defences." His ear twitched as his eyes scanned the screen "it appears our guest is waking up, why don't you go see if Shuzenji will let you talk to him."

Hawks opened his eyes to a white ceiling, so he'd landed in the infirmary, again. His brain was a bit fuzzy, he remembered a fight, but not much else, he'd probably find out what happened when his handlers came to lecture him. He ran a mental checklist, he didn't feel hurt more than usual, so why was he in here?

A soft humming sound distracted him. Who could that be? Not one of his handlers, not one of the doctors either, and Madame President hadn't hired anyone new as far as he remembered.

He bolted upright, eyes darting around. He wasn't in the HPSC infirmary, *where was he?*

He heard the humming stop, he turned to where it was coming from, feathers sharpened and hovering over the other person.

He was met with the sight of an elderly woman, not that it mattered, he knew not to underestimate his opponent. He observed her, trying to place her face to any villain he knew of.

Wait.

He knew her face, but it wasn't that of a villain.

Recovery Girl walked up to him, cane gently pushing his feathers

away. “Well, it seems you’re finally awake, took a bit longer than it should have, must have knocked your head pretty hard when you fell.”

Hawks stared at her in silence, why was she here? He looked around, this didn’t seem like a hospital, but then where else could they be? He wracked his brain trying to remember how he’d gotten knocked out in the first place.

And all at once it hit him, he’d disobeyed commission orders and helped a group of their enemies. Specifically, three rogue heroes, who all happened to work at UA, and were giving information to Nedzu, the principal of UA, and now he was in an infirmary with Recovery Girl, who was UA’s school nurse.

He was at UA.

He wasn’t at the HPSC.

His handlers were going to put him through *so much* retraining when he got back.

Suddenly the door burst open and a kid dashed into the infirmary, eyes darting around before settling on Hawks, a wide, and slightly feral, grin grew on their face as they skipped over to the chair next to the bed.

Shortly following them was the youngest Todoroki, clutching the door frame as he caught his breath. “How, on earth, do they run, *so fast*?” He asked to nobody in particular.

Hawks was barely able to register this as the first kid was now very much in his space. “Hello! Are you feeling better?” They asked, leaning forward, and Hawks finally recognized that this must be Wraith, hoodie and mask pulled back to reveal a young child with fluffy green hair and a bright-eyed expression on a face covered in freckles.

He heard Recovery Girl click her tongue, “give him some space you little munchkin,” she said, gently shooing Wraith away with a wave of her cane.

The kid glanced back at Hawks, seemingly only just realising how close they’d gotten, and leaned back sheepishly, “sorry, I didn’t mean to scare you.”

About then, a few more people filtered into the room, mostly pro heroes, although Hawks also recognized the Iida kid and the other two Todoroki siblings, as well as a very irritated looking Dabi. He made a mental catalogue of the heroes, obviously the three he'd captured were there, as well as Hound Dog, Ingenium, Midnight, and Thirteen. He counted three of them as more UA staff and Ingenium as probably being related to Iida Tenya, given the shared name.

Eraserhead quickly approached Wraith, picking them up in a manner that reminded Hawks of a mother cat he once saw carrying her kitten. Wraith squirmed a bit but eventually went limp, turning their head to pout at Eraserhead who sighed and set them down away from Hawks.

"What do you want?" Hawks finally found his voice as he took in the slightly overwhelming number of threats in the room.

"We just wanted to check if you were alright Birdie, you've been out for an hour, that's crazy, especially for someone who just got tazed. If RG wasn't here, I'd have been confident that you wouldn't make it." Dabi said in a bored tone, tapping his arm as he examined Hawks with a disinterested stare. Well, he didn't have to make it so obvious that he didn't care, whatever tactic he was trying clearly needed more practice.

Hawks looked at the others, "whatever information you want, I'm not giving it to you."

Midnight laughed at that "oh sweetie, why exactly do you think you're here?"

Hawks looked around again. None of the heroes, save for Eraserhead, had their weapons with them. Strange. If they wanted to interrogate him, why not make themselves look threatening? "Because I have valuable information on the commission?" He guessed, although he was less and less certain of that the more he thought about it.

"Nope, nothing of the sort little listener!" Present Mic exclaimed, "it's because the commission's been doing some majorly fucked up things, and you, my feathery friend, have clearly been caught up in it."

Eraserhead sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose, "translation: we know about the commission's child soldier project, and we know that you were one of their victims."

Hawks tensed, "for the record, I was trained because I wanted to be a hero, that doesn't make me a child soldier." He caught looks from

several people, most notably Wraith and Dabi, they'd tried to convince him when they first met, but, it still didn't make any sense.

Hound Dog huffed "I don't think it matters if you wanted to be a hero or not, the methods the commission documented are **beyond unethical.**" He growled on the last words, something which made all of Hawks' feathers puff out involuntarily. He hastily smoothed them, there was no need for such a messy display, especially not in front of a room of people who could probably kill him given the chance.

He felt a pair of eyes boring into him and found Wraith, looking at his wings as they flattened themselves in line with his thoughts. Their eyes shone as they fished a tiny black notebook and pen out of their pocket. Dabi glanced at them and sighed, pushing their hand back down and looking at them with a meaning Hawks couldn't understand.

Thirteen finally explained the whole situation, some things that Hawks already knew, like the part about Endeavour, as well as what they'd found in the file room. He still couldn't see the issue with the way the commission trained him, it all seemed fairly understandable.

Eventually, Thirteen gave up trying to explain and turned to Todoroki Shoto, "I thought you said you talked some sense into him."

Todoroki shrugged "I thought we did," he looked at Hawks "I told you what my father did to me, didn't I?"

Hawks nodded, to think that the hero he'd idolized was just as bad as his own father, "yeah, it sounds awful, I understand why you'd want to be free."

"Then *why* don't you see how similar your situations are?" Dabi threw his hands up in frustration.

Hawks rolled his eyes, "because they're not similar at all Ashes."

"By logic, yes they are!" the younger Iida explained loudly, doing a weird thing with his arm as he talked, "both of you were trained from a young age by authority figures who cared little for your actual wellbeing and saw you as a way to increase their own power, I think those are rather similar!"

Hawks paused for a moment, "but, that's, no that can't be right." And yet, somewhere in his traitorous brain, he really *was* starting to see the connections. Tears welled up in his eyes as he tried not to think

about the idea of these people being right. The world seemed to spin on its head and leave him suspended in the void, surrounded by nothing but his increasingly horrified thoughts.

Hawks barely heard someone gently asking him if he could hear them, he nodded. The voice then asked if he could see them and he shook his head, far too dizzy from the weightless falling to see past the blur in his eyes. The voice finally asked if he could take a deep breath, and he tried his best but ended up choking on his own tears, sending him into a coughing fit. He tried a few more times and finally he did it. As his eyes focused back in on the real world, he saw Hound Dog patiently standing next to him, the others having backed off, giving him space.

“It’s not true,” he still insisted, because no matter what, he just couldn’t accept it, he had wanted this, it didn’t matter how painful the process was if it made him a good hero.

Midnight sighed “well, whatever you think, it *is* true, but we can work on that later, for now, just know that, if you want, all of us here at UA are willing to shelter you.”

Hawks looked at all their faces, searching for any sign of deceit, but even Dabi’s expression seemed to be nothing but the most genuine concern he’d ever seen. He thought for a while, the commission would have him retrained regardless of how long it took to get him back, it was selfish, but maybe he could test the waters and see if these people truly meant their kindness. “Are you sure? The commission will be wanting me back.”

Vlad King nodded “we know, and we’re prepared, besides, we’re already planning on keeping these six here for safety, so what’s one more? Even the others who aren’t here right now would absolutely agree.”

“Others?” Hawks asked, “you mean, this isn’t the entire team?”

Present Mic shook his head “nope! The rest of the teachers here at UA are included. It’s a shame they were busy today, we could have used their help.”

Hawks tilted his head in curiosity, what did that mean? Dabi must have seen his curious glance “if you thought we were insane for trying to sneak into the HPSC, just wait till you see what happens when you get ten pro heroes to make a plan.”

“Trust me, if the others were here, we’d already have a riot on our hands,” Ingenium added, and laughed when he was glared at by several people, “*come on!* Don’t deny it, the second you get the chance you’re all storming the commission building with lighters and gasoline.” Hawks’ eyes widened at the casual threat Ingenium had just made against the commission.

“Well first off, that is the *least* efficient way to burn down a building, Higari has a few things in xyr garage that would work better. Secondly, we would never even consider it! Could you imagine the number of innocent people who’d get caught in the crossfire?” Thirteen waved their arms in the air as they explained with increasing alarm at the suggestion, although Hawks wasn’t sure they’d taken offense to the right parts of that sentence.

“Yes, if we were going to do anything impulsive, we’d just hunt down the higher ups *one by one*,” Eraserhead said, grinning with a sharpness that made Hawks want to cower under his wings. He really shouldn’t be going along with this. These heroes just made it *very* clear that they were willing to do a lot of things if it meant taking down the HPSC.

Still, he looked over at Wraith, Dabi, and the Todoroki siblings, they were all looking at him earnestly, or, whatever seemed to count as earnest in Dabi’s case. He stared down at his gloved hands, the slight ache of his fingertips reminding him that they might be right about what the commission did. He would stay, just for a while, after all, it wasn’t like the retraining was going to get worse after this point. And perhaps he might have something new here, although good or bad, he still couldn’t quite tell.

Chapter End Notes

Hawks has no idea what he's gotten himself into.

Chapter 52: -flock together

Chapter Summary

Hawks starts to figure out his new situation and learns a bit about his new friends.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hawks didn't quite know what to make of the people he was apparently going to be living with for a while, for starters, he thought they were odd. A conclusion made after watching Wraith drop from an open vent directly onto Ingenium's brother, who caught them with an ease that spoke of many, *many*, previous occurrences of this nature. Especially since none of the adults had even batted an eye at the behaviour. The next observation, was that they were ridiculously well attuned to each other's emotions, responding to even the slightest twitch in facial expression, something that had looked like mind reading until Hawks started actively looking for the signs. He doubted these would be the only noteworthy observations he'd make over the next few weeks, or however long it took the dust to settle.

He had also taken the liberty of looking around the room he'd be sleeping in. The 1-C classroom had been cleared out, as it was 'the least messed up' according to Present Mic, the desks were all pushed to the walls and the chairs were stacked, leaving an area that seemed just big enough for each person to have some space to themself. Not that it seemed to matter for anyone except Dabi, who was staying away from the clustered group of the others. The windows were all locked, although Hawks didn't know if that was to stop people from getting in, or him from getting out, certainly they had no reason to just, *trust* that he wouldn't fly away the first chance he got. He wasn't planning on escaping, not yet, it hadn't proven necessary, the commission would win in the end, as always, and he would be taken back without fuss, so there was no point in risking getting hurt now, just for the slightest chance to lessen his inevitable punishment.

At first, Hawks had been prepared to sleep on the floor, it wasn't unusual and certainly not the most uncomfortable thing he'd slept on. But Present Mic and Midnight had gone and fetched blankets and

pillows from, who knows where, as well as a change of clothes for each of them. Wraith clearly must have recognized some things, since they immediately claimed the blanket themed after Thirteen, as well as one particular pillow. Dabi also took one of the pillows, which had a snowflake patterned case and seemed to be a bit scorched, and set it down aside from the small pile. Still, they hadn't necessarily given him any of those things, and he wasn't sure what the consequences of taking what wasn't his would be. They might be trying to help him, but that didn't mean they didn't have their own set of rules to follow.

Most of the heroes had gone home, they had decided to take shifts, pairs of two would stay at UA as an extra precaution. Present Mic and Midnight were currently in the classroom across the hall. Hawks was surprised that Present Mic had even offered to stay, surely he had to hate Hawks after what happened.

He felt a someone walk up next to him, looking up he saw Dabi's smug face staring at him.

"What do you want Ashes?"

Dabi frowned at the nickname, Hawks grinned, it seemed surprisingly easy to anger Dabi, and while it was a little risky, he had been getting on Hawks' nerves since minute one, so it was only fair. "Nothing *Birdie*," Dabi grabbed a chair from the stack and set it down, sitting down in a way that was *definitely* not how people were supposed to sit. "Just wondering if you were going to stay in this corner and pout the whole day."

"Are you asking me to join the group?" Hawks asked, because he honestly couldn't tell from the tone of Dabi's voice.

"Nah, I get it if you need some space, but we wouldn't mind if you wanted to hang out, at least, they wouldn't," right, of course Dabi wouldn't like it, but it didn't sound like a threat. At first, Hawks didn't know what he'd done to get on Dabi's bad side, but seeing the way he acted with everyone else, Hawks was starting to suspect that mean and grumpy was his default state.

Wraith bounded over to the pair, eyes gleaming, "hey! We're doing an experiment! Do you two want to help?"

Dabi looked at them suspiciously "does this experiment have anything to do with the fact that you haven't gotten the chance to ask Birdie some questions?"

Wraith froze “what? No…”

Dabi just raised an eyebrow.

“Okay fine, yes, but can you blame me! Look at him! He’s fascinating!” Hawks supressed a flinch at their choice of words, he really hoped they weren’t about to tear his feathers off to study, it had taken weeks for them to regrow after the last time, and his handlers would lock him in his room if he couldn’t perform his duties.

“Birdie?” Dabi snapped his fingers in front of Hawks’ face, oh, he’d zoned out. He quickly straightened up and gave a sheepish grin to the other two, he really should be more careful.

“Um, you have questions?” He tried to deflect from his moment of weakness, but the looks he got in return said that it hadn’t worked.

“Later, come on, let’s go talk to the others.” Wraith grabbed Dabi’s arm and reached their other hand towards Hawks, stopping just short of actually touching him, before pulling their hand back, seemingly changing their mind and beckoning him instead.

The second the others noticed Hawks, the conversation grew stilted, as if they were trying to keep talking while not quite knowing what to do about the intruder in their midst. Iida walked up to Wraith “hey Izuku, Shoto thinks he could make snowflakes, do you want to take notes?” Hawks paused. Wait.

“Your name is Izuku?” He blurted out, it was only then that he realised he’d never actually asked for Wraith and Dabi’s real names.

Wraith, *Izuku*, turned to face him, seemingly just as surprised as he was “did I forget to tell you?” They looked embarrassed, “well, yeah, my name is Izuku, sorry for not introducing myself earlier.”

Hawks shook his head “it’s fine, at least I know now, on the other hand, I’d like to know your name too Ashes,” he gave a pointed look at Dabi.

Dabi laughed “wait a damn second, we still don’t know *your* name, why should I tell you mine! That would be unfair.”

“I already told you! I’m Hawks.” He knew that’s not what they wanted, they wanted an actual name, but they were going to be sorely disappointed.

“That’s your hero name! That’s not your actual name!” Dabi raised his voice, glaring at Hawks.

“Yes it is!”

Silence descended over the group, lasting for several seconds.

“Your, *real* name, is Hawks?” Todoroki Fuyumi asked incredulously, finally breaking the silence.

“Well, yes and no,” Hawks floundered as he tried to explain something that nobody else was supposed to know, “I technically *have* my birth name, but, the commission never allowed any of my handlers to use it, and actively discouraged me from remembering it, and only put Hawks on all the documentation, so that I got used to it as my new name whether I liked it or not…”

Oh.

Hawks let out a bitter laugh, startling everyone.

“Uh. Birdie? have you lost your fucking mind?” Dabi exclaimed.

Hawks shook his head “sorry, it’s just that, it really *does* sound awful when I say it out loud,” he sighed, “*how* did I never notice?”

“You really shouldn’t be so hard on yourself” Todoroki Shoto said, “Inui says that anyone can start to think that any situation is normal, if they don’t experience anything else.”

Hawks shrugged, “I guess.”

Dabi cleared his throat, “*anyways*, hey Shoto, you had a new trick to show us?” Hawks looked over at him, giving a small smile of gratitude at the very obvious attempt to change the topic.

“Huh? Oh, yeah,” he held out his right hand and a small puff of icy air formed in his palm, settling quickly to reveal a rather simple snowflake about the size of his thumb. “It’s still a work in progress, but I think that’s an improvement from the last time, right?” He looked over at Izuku who pulled out a notebook that was bigger than the one Hawks saw earlier, it was labelled **‘Training Notes’**, and flipped through to a page that showed a scrapbook like collage of pictures, each with dates meticulously labelled. Most were of fire, wilder shapes of orange, and more refined displays in blue, and some were rough looking ice sculptures.

They nodded, seemingly satisfied with their comparison, high fiving the youngest Todoroki and quickly pulling their hand back because of the cold. This sent both children into a fit of laughter as the snowflake sculpture melted on the floor.

Hawks stepped back from the group, feeling very much like he was witnessing something that he wasn't meant to see. But Dabi nudged him back, like the annoyingly persistent jerk that he was. Hawks glared at Dabi, who just shrugged "you're fine Birdie, everyone wants you here."

Hawks huffed "that's not really your call, besides I'm sure they didn't like you sticking around the first time you met."

"*No,*" Todoroki Natsuo interjected suddenly "we *definitely* wanted him to stick around, and we want you to stick around too."

Todoroki Shoto nodded, clearly not listening to the conversation as he continued to try and make snowflakes in his palm, "even if the situations aren't really the same since we don't know you and he's our brother."

Hawks' brain froze "wait, *brother?*"

Dabi put his head in his hand "damn it Shoto, pay attention to what you're saying, that's the second time now you've told Birdie something you weren't supposed to."

Todoroki Shoto looked confused "but you said you didn't care if he found out, and that he'd have to know at some point if we were going to be friends with him."

"Yeah, but *I* wanted to say it," Dabi frowned, and sparks of blue flared across his arms.

"Oh, I'm sorry." To his credit, he *did* look genuinely remorseful that he made Dabi upset.

Hawks looked between the pair, feeling increasingly awkward "um, I can just, pretend the kid never said that?"

Dabi shook his head, sighing, "I doubt it, that's not how brains work and you're probably halfway to figuring it out already. I didn't want to do this now, but..."

He turned and gave a dramatic bow with as much flair as humanly

possible, “Todoroki Touya, the universe failed to kill me and I’m making it everyone’s problem.”

Hawks’ eyes widened “you’re, oh, okay, that makes, a lot of sense actually now that I think about it.” He looked at Dabi, or rather Todoroki Touya, re-examining him with this new information. “Well it’s nice to meet you Todo-”

A hand covered his mouth, cutting him off. “Nope, literally never call me that or I’m going to turn you into rotisserie chicken, I’m just Touya. *Got it?*”

Hawks nodded rapidly, suddenly incredibly wary of the embers flickering over Touya’s arms, “yep, definitely, understood loud and clear, Touya it is.”

Touya grinned “good, and, for the record, that goes for my siblings too, none of us really want to be reminded exactly who our old man is every minute you know?”

“Right, of course.” Hawks paused “um, so you said earlier that it would be, *unfair* if I knew your name if you didn’t know mine, right?”

Touya shook his head quickly “oh, that, don’t worry about it, I was mostly just being an asshole for the hell of it, you really don’t have to tell us your name.”

“Oh, well, it still feels unfair, and it’s not like I really care either way, it’s just a name, nothing particularly special.” Hawks dug through his memories, he remembered his family name well enough, but it took a startlingly long time of searching through broken bottles and blank stares to recall his given name. “Takami Keigo, that’s my name, or, what I remember as my name at least.”

“Keigo?” Touya stared at him, the word felt alien to Hawks’ brain, like it was having a hard time reconciling it as *his* name, “weirdly enough, it suits you Birdie.”

Fuyumi spoke “Takami? I feel like I’ve heard that somewhere else.”

“Probably because my father was one of the villains Endeavor took down, about a decade ago, The Red Thief, I think he was called.”

Touya nodded “oh yeah, I think I heard the bastard gloating about it, you must despise him huh?”

Hawks frowned “funny thing is, until today, Endeavor was my favourite hero” he saw Touya pull a face and chuckled “yeah, not anymore, now that I know that he’s just as bad as my father was.”

“Oh great, another person with awful bio parents added to this mess of a family, really, I should have seen this coming the moment we met you” Izuku grinned.

Hawks took a step back, “I don’t quite know about that, I mean, isn’t it a bit early to make *that* call?”

Touya put a hand Hawks’ shoulders and stared directly into his eyes with a seriousness that was startling compared to his normal attitude, “listen, Keigo, can I call you Keigo?” Hawks nodded, slightly afraid. “Right, trust me when I say it is probably way *past* time to have made the call, knowing these weirdos and their frankly *insane* persistence, you were probably stuck with us the moment that Aizawa and Kan found those files. Just accept your fate because there’s no convincing this bunch *not* to help someone.”

Hawks stood there like an idiot for several seconds before slowly nodding “okay? I guess.”

“Alright! Now, I have a few questions for you” Izuku pulled out yet *another* notebook, this time labelled **‘Analysis #10’**. Seriously, *where* were they keeping all of these?

He didn’t get to find out what these questions were, as Iida carefully took the book from Izuku’s hands. At their pouting face he simply said, “it’s getting late, and we’ve been running around all day now, we should go to sleep.”

“*Fine.*” Izuku relented, and grabbed their pyjamas, which were just a plain shirt and a pair of pants with the word pyjamas written on the side. “we can use the showers to change, I’ll show you where they are.”

Hawks was about to stay behind when Touya tossed a pair of sweatpants and a hoodie at him, “here, Kayama brought extra ones of mine, probably for you, although I’m not sure that hoodie is going to work too welk with those wings.”

Hawks shrugged examining the clothes “it’s fine Ashes, I can squash my wings pretty tightly, it’ll fit.”

Touya frowned “that doesn’t seem too comfortable Birdie,” he looked

at the t-shirt in his hand, “you know what, give me the hoodie, I’m not too attached to this shirt, we can cut some holes in it for your wings.”

Hawks sputtered “wait, you really don’t have to do that.”

“Like I said, I wouldn’t mind, you can use your feathers to cut fabric, right?” Touya held the t-shirt out to him.

Hawks started to argue, but one glare told him it was probably a losing battle. He sighed “you are one *stubborn* guy Ashes,” he said, carefully cutting two holes in the cloth.

“I am one of the *least* stubborn people in this family, so you better get used to it Birdie,” Touya grinned.

After changing into something much more comfortable than his hero costume, and it really *was* nice to not have to awkwardly fold up his wings, he rejoined the group. He heard soft exclamations from several people. He grimaced as he remembered that some of his mutations were now fully visible. Izuku’s eyes lit up with that spark of energy that, so far, has meant nothing sane was about to be said.

“You have *claws*.” Izuku leaned over, examining Hawks’ distinctly bird-like feet, with talons replacing toes and a dewclaw sprouting from his heel. He waited for the inevitable remarks of disgust, but instead.

“That’s so cool!”

“Uh, sure, I guess?” Hawks wasn’t quite sure how to respond to that, but nobody else seemed to be disagreeing with them.

“Do you have them on your hands too?” Izuku asked staring at his fingers which, at first glance, looked like he had black nail polish on.

“I used to, but, well, I think you can guess what happened.” Hawks flexed his hands, the constant ache from his talons always being kept short was impossible to ignore.

“That’s horrible!” Iida exclaimed “does it hurt?”

“A bit,” Hawks looked for a way out of the conversation, “hey, why don’t we go to bed, you did say we should get some rest.”

Iida took the obvious hint, and the group headed back to the classroom. Natsuo, Fuyumi, and Iida started laying out four of the six

blankets, shooing away the other three in their attempts to help. Hawks observed this for about thirty seconds before he frowned, the blankets looked *wrong* somehow. Eventually he couldn't tolerate the annoying itch at the back of his brain telling him to fix the blankets and grabbed one from Fuyumi, moving it several inches to the right and fussing with the layout.

"What are you doing?" Fuyumi asked.

"I don't entirely know, but I'm pretty sure it would be more comfortable if we laid the blanket this way."

"I'm just going to guess it's a bird thing," Natsuo said, dropping his blanket, "maybe we should just let your brain figure out the blankets."

It took a minute or two, and he'd also arranged the pillows, but Hawks was finally satisfied with the arrangement and stepped back, "done."

He was going to let everyone else get comfortable, but Shoto hesitantly grabbed his arm and pulled him into the middle of the blankets. He was a bit startled, but didn't move as everyone else slowly laid down. Fuyumi was the last one, laying the two other blankets over everybody and turning off the lights before squeezing into the pile of people.

"Good night everybody," he heard Iida whisper, followed by a chorus of good nights from the others.

Hawks hesitated for a bit, before responding as he drifted off to sleep.

"Good night."

Chapter End Notes

I love making Hawks just, even *more* bird than he is in cannon.

Chapter 53: Convictions.

Chapter Summary

Hawks wonders just how far the heroes are willing to go.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It took less than a day for the plan to start moving along. And even less than that for Hawks to start worrying.

That morning he'd been woken up by the sounds of screeching and laughter as Touya yelled obscenities at his siblings, who had collectively used their quirks to trap him in place. They'd been nice enough to leave the other three out of their little prank, but it did take them several minutes to mop up the water that resulted from Touya melting the ice. Natsuo was quick to send pictures of the whole thing to Midnight.

They were all greeted by the two heroes who had taken the morning shift, Thirteen and Vlad King. Hawks stayed far away from Vlad King, who kept staring at him, it was probably just keeping an eye on him, but he couldn't help but feel guilty whenever he saw it. Thirteen had somehow gotten their hands on some shirts that were designed for winged heteromorphs, they were a size too big, but Hawks was just glad he wouldn't have to ruin any more of Touya's shirts. He also asked them what exactly the heroes were planning to do. It wasn't that he didn't have faith in them, they were *heroes* after all, but he knew the commission's power, he'd seen first-hand how they could make people disappear. Not just go missing, no, unless someone had at least a dozen people who knew them, the commission would have little issue making it seem like that person never existed at all. Heroes were trickier, but honestly, with the nature of the job, it wouldn't be hard to pin the blame on some random villain. Hawks was sure that the only reason all of them hadn't been assassinated yet was because of the information that Nedzu was holding hostage.

Thirteen had been a bit caught off guard by the question, so Vlad King answered for them, even though Hawks really, *really* didn't want to talk to it. "The others are going to be caught up to speed today, for

now they only know the basics, we didn't want to spread too much information over text and call though. After that, we *have* a plan, but," Vlad King shrugged, "we're leaving most of this up to Nedzu, and we'll be wherever we're needed, although that's probably not going to happen anyways. And if we *are* key to the plan, it'll be because the commission decided to put out warrants for our arrest, and at that point, well, we'd better hope we can convince people to be on our side."

That, didn't really fill him with confidence, but he appreciated the honesty.

It also turned out that they were being given free rein to wander around the interior of the main building, as long as they were at least in pairs or had a hero within yelling distance. Hawks noted that several people quickly nudged closer to each other. Iida said he was headed to the cafeteria and Izuku went with him, skipping down the hallway and grinning, Hawks hoped they wouldn't get into trouble. The Todoroki siblings started bickering amongst themselves on where each of them wanted to go. Hawks just decided to stay near the two heroes and explore a bit of the hallways, seeing if he could map out the general area.

He wandered around for a while, before settling on staring out a classroom window to the rest of UA's grounds. He could see the wall curve around and disappear behind a series of buildings, all presumably used by the various courses. The sky above looked open and clear, but Hawks was sure there must be security measures protecting against aerial attacks. He wondered how long it would take the commission to shatter those measures, maybe a few days, a week if they were lucky. His eyes caught a small group entering the grounds, the heroes had arrived, ready to wage a war that was impossible to win. Hawks shook his head, no, they had leverage, so not *impossible*, but they had all the other odds stacked against them, the commission had resources, influence, and far, *far* more raw power than could be matched by thirteen heroes and a bunch of kids. He supposed it was fourteen if he counted himself, but the idea of even trying to fight against *the commission itself?* He wasn't entirely sure he wouldn't just give up and await the inevitable. He wasn't even sure that the heroes wouldn't give him up if the threat became too much, he wouldn't begrudge them, everyone had a limit.

He sighed, breath condensing on the glass, today decided their fate, these negotiations were the key to a peaceful resolution. He went out to the hallway to assess these heroes, he didn't know why, maybe he

just wanted to see what their chances really were. He noted the four new heroes in the team, Ectoplasm, Power Loader, Cementoss, and Snipe, he wasn't surprised to see them, just, interested. He got some curious looks from Cementoss, and probably the other three as well, but he couldn't tell with their faces being covered. For a moment he wondered where Nedzu was, but quickly noticed him almost completely hiding in Eraserhead's capture weapon, which seemed like it really shouldn't work, but Hawks wasn't in the mood to question reality.

Thirteen informed Hawks that they'd be in the principal's office and then left to catch up to the others who were already down the hallway. Hawks returned to staring out of the window, impatience already gnawing at him.

He had started trying to find shapes in the clouds, when a soft thud caused him to whirl around, feathers sharpened. Had someone had managed to sneak into UA already? Hawks froze when he recognized the child standing frozen with their hands up in surrender.

Izuku backed away slightly, "sorry, I thought you might want some company. Now that everyone is in Nedzu's office, we should stick together. "

"Then shouldn't you be with the others?" Hawks asked.

Izuku shrugged "*they're* all together, and *you're* all alone. So why don't we both head back?" They started walking towards the 1-C classroom, stopping when they realised that Hawks had made no move to follow. "Is something up?"

"The commission, you know you can't beat them, right?" Hawks asked, part of him was hoping that Izuku would just laugh and say that *of course they could win*, and that Hawks' fears were all unfounded.

"I know. We all know that, unless we're careful, we stand no chance, but we're going to try anyways."

Hawks stared at them "why?"

"Because they hurt people, and for as long as we can fight, we will fight for justice and safety, even if it means going up against one of the most powerful institutions in Japan." Izuku's eyes burned with a wildness that Hawks could barely recognize as belonging to the same child that was laughing with their friends only that morning.

“I,” Hawks took a deep breath, exhaling slowly as he gathered his thoughts, “I don’t know, I don’t even know what kind of threats the commission might be giving them right now, how long it’ll take before one of those threats is acted on. And I don’t know how this could possibly end peacefully.” Not without him being surrendered.

“Peacefully?” Izuku looked like they wanted to laugh, “this was never going to resolve peacefully, but I get why you’re worried, I mean, I want to know what’s going on in there too, but, I don’t want to go off on my own just to find out. Everyone would be looking for me and get scared.”

“As if you could even get into that room right now, the commission would take advantage of your presence immediately.”

“That would be if I had to go into the room at all.” Izuku grinned.

Hawks didn’t like the sound of that, but then again, if he could observe the proceedings undetected, maybe he could finally get rid of this horrible dread. “And how would you do that?”

Izuku gave him a sly grin, “oh, you’ll need me to access it. So, if you back me up when I tell everyone I’m going to be showing you around the building, I’ll get you to the room, deal?” They held out their hand, and Hawks shook it without hesitation.

“Deal.”

Izuku led him back to the others, who all readily believed their excuse, although Touya and Tenya had looked incredibly suspicious until Hawks affirmed the story.

Then Izuku led him to an unassuming hallway, stopping right at a random spot along the wall. Hawks looked around, very confused “uh, Izuku, how exactly are we supposed to get to the office from here?”

Izuku didn’t answer, instead, they placed two fingers onto a random tile. Hawks was about to repeat the question when a panel in the wall slid open, revealing a passageway. “The vents are modified specifically for stuff like this,” they explained before crawling into the space.

“Wait, *this* is why you keep dropping from vent grates?” Hawks really should have figured this out sooner. He quickly followed them, having to pull his wings tight to his body to fit inside. He stayed right behind them the whole way as they navigated the almost maze-like structure

of the vents, which were significantly less dusty than he had been expecting, they must be cleaned far more than a normal vent system. Eventually, Izuku slowed, being much more careful in their movements and making sure not to make a single sound, Hawks did the same, they must be near Nedzu's office.

Voices drifted into the vents, and Hawks could hear the cold voice of Madame President herself. He watched Izuku use their small size to carefully turn around, now facing him as they both looked down into the office through the grate.

"I understand exactly what you're saying Madame President. However, this does not change the fact that we have no interest in backing down." Nedzu said, an extra sharpness in his tone. He was speaking to a computer just out of view, Hawks wished he could see Madame President's expression.

"Of course, I suppose it was too much to expect you to be reasonable, I shall be notifying my acquaintances, we *will* get our agent back." Hawks supressed a shiver at the threat.

"Feel free to gather as many allies as you like, this information is going to be released to the public, none of your promises or threats are going to change that." Izuku frowned when they heard that, like they didn't quite believe it.

"In that case I suppose I'll just inform Endeavour of his children's whereabouts. I'm sure you can deal with two different scandals at once, couldn't you?" Madame President's voice was dripping with fake concern.

"Like I said, we have the upper hand, we are going through with this no matter what," Nedzu maintained an even tone, but the look Izuku was giving him made it very clear what kind of effect that threat really had.

"And what do you plan on doing once that information comes out? The people will panic, there will be chaos."

Before Nedzu could answer that, Power Loader interjected "frankly, I don't think anyone with half a braincell will be too surprised."

"And besides" Ectoplasm added "no matter what happens, that *kid* is not going back to you."

Madame President's voice grew irritated "Nedzu, control your

subordinates."

Nedzu shook his head "I'm sorry, but my *colleagues* are correct, you have no right to do this much harm, especially not to children."

"He isn't a child-" Madame President was cut off by several people.

"He might be eighteen now, but how old was he when you started brainwashing him? Eight? Nine?" Vlad King snapped.

"And even if he's not legally a child, he's still young," Eraserhead glared at the computer screen, "he's barely older than our students, and you expect us to just give up on him?"

Hawks' eyes widened. They had to be worried about their own safety. They must have at least *considered* sending him back, right? Maybe use that as a backup plan. But the sheer conviction in their voices made him second guess that assumption.

"We can help him" Cementoss added "we *will* help him."

"You won't get him back without a fight." Midnight threatened.

"You have no room to speak on the matter, Hawks is our agent, he knows nothing else, and once we get in contact with him, I'm sure we can condition him to obey our orders again." Hawks shrank back, closing his eyes and forcibly stiffening his body so that he didn't make a sound.

A hand touched his arm, and he opened his eyes to see Izuku looking concerned. They pulled lightly at his shirt, before turning around and making their way down the vent, Hawks followed. Despite his concern, he was far more concerned that he might get them caught if he kept listening.

They crawled in silence, until Izuku opened another panel in a different hallway, allowing them to leave the vents. It was only then that Hawks allowed his wings to wrap around himself, shaking with fear.

Izuku smiled softly "we're not going to let them take you, I promise."

Hawks nodded "I know, I know that now." He felt tears well up in his eyes, and a determination fill his heart, there was no reason for him to feel so hopeless. If these people, who didn't even know of his existence before yesterday, were willing to give their all to fight for him, then

he would repay that in kind. The commission would not hurt any of them easily, and certainly not while he was still breathing.

Chapter End Notes

I wonder what'll happen once that info gets leaked :3

Chapter 54: Plans in Motion.

Chapter Summary

> Every action has consequences, and the HPSC isn't going to just lay down and die.

Chapter Notes

> --- : POV switch
> Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Nedzu's ears flicked in irritation as he ended the call. The HPSC was as stubborn as ever, not that it mattered, but he had hoped to do this in a way that wouldn't be stressful for the children. The HPSC would have its attention divided between shutting down the scandal and getting Hawks back. Hopefully that would be enough to allow them to keep the children safe. He had several emails prepared, all he had to do was click send and the whole of Japan would learn about the corruption running through the HPSC. It would start with news outlets, as well as some of Nedzu's trusted associates, then, unless the HPSC could figure out exactly who had been given the information, at least one story would be released, after that, well, the hive mind of the internet would work its magic.

He sent the emails, no matter the outcome of the next few days, the HPSC would not come out of this without a stain on their reputation.

He turned to look at his fellow heroes, all with a fire in their eyes that he'd seen many times over the last few years, a fire that was likely mirrored in his own expression. The fire of those that had to fight for their place in the world and now refused to let anyone else fight alone. He bared his teeth, even if they lost, even if the information was somehow contained, even if UA was shut down, there was nothing the commission could do to get rid of them.

All they had to do now, was make sure that nobody got inside UA's premises. Nedzu and Majima had already run a thorough check of the firewalls protecting the electronically controlled doors, scanners, and countermeasures, fortifying even the slightest possible crack. And the rest of the staff had gone around checking the physical integrity of their outer wall, making sure there was no chance of entry. The

children were hopefully all in the 1-C classroom, and if needed, Izuku and Tenya knew every escape route by heart. They had planned to stay until the media attention died down enough that they wouldn't be accosted by reporters if they tried to step out of the gates. Not to mention the commission still had several extremely loyal agents, even if they weren't trained as heroes, their capabilities shouldn't be underestimated.

Nedzu dismissed the meeting, and his colleagues left his office. Majima threw him a glance before xe left, "you're going to let me take over monitor duty in two hours, *right*?" Nedzu just nodded, already focusing on the numerous camera feeds on his monitor, switching between the outer cameras and the ones in the main building. Takeda dragged his spouse away, muttering about Nedzu being a stubborn bastard.

Nedzu's eyes occasionally darted from the monitor to a second laptop, on which he was running a search for any internet activity related to UA and the HPSC. His eyes took mere seconds to scan each set of article headlines and posts that had been flagged. So far none appeared to be about the information leak, that was fair, it had been less than an hour, but every minute that ticked by was increasing the slim probability that the HPSC had somehow done the impossible.

But all that truly mattered was that nobody could hurt the children, not under his watch.

Touya had to elbow Fuyumi to get her hair out of his face, both of their eyes glued to the screens in front of them. The entire group was gathered on the floor, Touya and Natsuo were constantly scrolling through social media and the news feed on their phones, hoping to catch the first sign of the plan working. Izuku and Fuyumi were leaning over Touya's shoulder, Natsuo had to deal with Tenya next to him constantly pointing out articles that might be even tangentially related while Shoto was leaning so far toward his brother that he was practically siting in Tenya's lap. And Keigo had perched himself right behind Touya, face on his other shoulder, wings wrapped around all seven of them like a blanket.

It took an agonizingly long time for anything to happen, but finally, Touya found an article. Its headline was impossible to miss, big bold letters proclaiming that the commission was hiding a dark secret, a clickbait title if he'd ever seen one, but certainly what they were looking for. He opened the article and looked up to see everyone's eyes on the screen, all their expressions being varying levels of

vindictive glee and he was certain he was grinning the same way. Keigo was the most reserved, just staring at the article on screen, eyes wide and the slightest hint of a smile on his face.

Natsuo shoved his phone in front of them, it seemed that some people had caught the article just as quickly as they had, there were only a few posts so far, a single thread on twitter, but people *were* talking. And they seemed to be angry, a fight was bound to start, and on the internet? Fights drew attention, *fast*.

“Well, it looks like we’ve won after all,” Touya grinned.

“I wouldn’t be too sure” Keigo frowned “the commission has handled scandals before, just because they’ll get hurt doesn’t mean we’re safe.” Touya was surprised at how quickly Keigo had gone from claiming they were all doomed to thinking they had a slim chance, whatever Izuku told him while they were showing him around must have been pretty inspirational.

“Yes, but that’s why we’re in here, so that our family doesn’t have to worry about us.” Tenya pointed out, “no civilian is getting through those gates and even a full team of heroes would have quite a bit of trouble.”

“Hey Tenya? Maybe *don’t* tempt fate into *actually* throwing a bunch of heroes at us?” Natsuo grumbled, looking at the window furtively like he expected someone to break in at any moment.

“Oh come on, you guys are being even more paranoid than my dad,” Izuku shook their head and Touya laughed, that was just impressive considering they were talking about a man who never left home without taking a weapon of some kind with him.

“I think some paranoia is warranted considering the situation,” Natsuo snapped.

“Can we all just *relax*?” Fuyumi asked, hiding further under Keigo’s wing.

“Yumi’s right, all of you shut the fuck up” Touya raised his voice just enough to make a point.

Keigo shoved him lightly, “Ashes you jerk, don’t yell in my ear!”

“Um, Tenya?” Shoto caught everyone’s attention, “you’re positive about the wall’s integrity, right?” He was staring at Natsuo’s phone,

which he had apparently snatched at some point.

“Yes? Why?” Tenya sounded worried. Everyone else quickly strained to look at whatever Shoto was seeing, equally concerned.

Shoto showed the phone screen, it showed a video someone had taken from outside the gates of UA, reporters and civilians alike had started to gather, speaking into cameras and phones, presumably talking about the situation.

“Well shit, it looks like nobody’s getting in or out of here for a while,” Natsuo said as he walked to the window, trying to catch a glimpse of the outside from there. He sighed and sat back down, apparently unable to see the small crowd.

Touya checked the news again, earlier they had to dig to find that one article, but it seemed that the other journalists that Nedzu had sent the information to had gotten their act together. He even saw some articles already trying to deny the claims and defend the commission, no doubt assisted by their PR team. Social media was even worse, a cursory search with a few keywords revealed argument after argument between those that believed the claim, and those that trusted the commission.

“I think we’ve got bigger problems than that, the commission has started their counterattack” Touya said, showing one of the commission’s articles.

Izuku and Keigo shared a look, making some kind of connection that the rest of them didn’t have the pieces to. Touya shrugged it off, they would have said something by now if it was really important, they were probably just recognizing the kinds of tactics the commission was using. But that didn’t explain the flicker of worry that went across Izuku’s face.

Fuyumi tapped Touya’s shoulder, she looked pointedly at the others, who all seemed to be in varying states of hope and terror, she then looked back at him. Touya nodded, turning off his phone.

“This is getting boring.” He said, standing up and stretching, “anyone want to do something else?”

Fuyumi smiled “yeah, how about we tell ghost stories?”

Touya had to resist sighing, of course Fuyumi wanted ghost stories. “Hey Yumi, how about you don’t give people nightmares?”

Natsuo nodded in agreement “yeah, I say we play a game.”

“Like what?” Shoto asked “we don’t have anything to play with.”

“We could do sleepover games, like truth or dare?” Izuku suggested.

“I’m not sure that particular game is a good idea with this group” Tenya pointed out.

“Well what else could we do? All the games that don’t need us to do dumb stuff are either boring or need some physical thing!” Izuku argued.

Keigo raised a hand “um, I’m pretty sure we could do something like never have I ever without breaking anything, right?”

Fuyumi nodded. “Yep, okay, we’re doing never have I ever,” she said firmly, not even leaving room for anyone else to suggest something, which, judging by the expressions on everyone else’s faces, was a good thing.

They gathered around in a circle and Fuyumi went first, grinning deviously. “Never have I ever gotten in a fight.” She cackled as everyone else put a finger down.

“That is not fair,” Touya grumbled.

“Shush, it’s my turn” Natsuo put a hand over Touya’s mouth. “Never have I ever, broken a leg and tried to walk it off.”

He grinned at Touya who glared at him and put a finger down “you’re never letting me live that down are you?”

Izuku cleared their throat and put a finger down, followed by Keigo. “You’ve got to be kidding, Birdie I understand, but what the hell happened to you Izuku?” Touya exclaimed.

“Vigilantism, bullies, and a non-existent support system” they explained.

“You know what, I don’t think I want the details,” Touya said. “Moving on, never have I ever gotten sick.” He grinned as everyone else put a finger down.

“That’s still the most unfair thing ever” Natsuo grumbled.

“Hey, my genetics screwed me over in the worst way, so I’m happy I

at *least* got an amazing immune system," Touya retorted.

Tenya was next, and took some time to think about his question, "the aim is to get as many people as possible to put their finger down, *no matter what*, right?" He asked sheepishly.

"That's the idea, why?" Shoto asked.

"In that case I'm sorry in advance" Tenya said, giving them all an apologetic look.

"Wait what?" Izuku looked mildly concerned.

"Never have I ever" Tenya hesitated, "had a bad relationship with my parents."

The entire group was silent for several seconds, then Izuku started cackling and Touya joined them.

"*Damn*, that was harsh," Natsuo grinned, putting a finger down along with everyone else.

"Too harsh?" Tenya asked, slightly concerned.

"I mean, you're right, aren't you?" Keigo pointed out.

"In matters of fun, you need to be ruthless" Fuyumi agreed, eyes shining with a competitiveness that made Touya remember exactly why monopoly was banned in their house.

Shoto shuddered "you know what, I think I'll take my turn. Never have I ever played never have I ever before today."

Several people laughed at that, and only Keigo didn't put a finger down.

Keigo chuckled, "I think this is probably the most boring one so far, but, never have I ever eaten ice cream."

"*What!?*" Fuyumi gasped.

Keigo shrugged, "blame the commission."

"Well that won't do," Tenya exclaimed, "the first thing we're doing after this is all over is taking you out for ice cream."

"Absolutely, as soon as I tell Aunt Nemuri she'll gladly take us," Izuku

added.

“Really?” Keigo’s eyes lit up “that would be fun!”

The game continued for a while, unsurprisingly, Keigo won round one, with Tenya right behind, then they played another round where Touya grumbled about being the first one out, and they’d just started round three when it happened.

“Never have I ever,” Fuyumi began, but was interrupted by her phone ringing, “oh, sorry, I’ll just see who it is.” She checked her phone and froze.

“What? Yumi? Who is it?” Touya leaned past Natsuo to try and see.

“It’s father,” Fuyumi’s voice wavered.

“Fuck,” Natsuo snatched the phone out of Fuyumi’s hand, stopping the call, “nope, no, absolutely not.”

“Do you think he knows?” Tenya asked.

Keigo nodded, wrapping a protective wing around Shoto, “me and Izuku overheard Madame President threaten to tell him about you.” Touya was going to ask them later how the fuck they managed that.

“I don’t think they know about Touya though, so there’s no way they told him that.” Izuku added.

“What do we do?” Shoto asked.

“Ignore it, Natsu, Yumi, turn off your phones, we can tell the others about it, they can keep an eye out.” Touya said firmly.

“What’ll happen when he does something to try and get us back?” Natsuo asked, looking to Fuyumi.

Fuyumi took a deep breath “we’ll cross that bridge when we get there, for now, we just have to trust that the heroes can handle whatever he throws their way.”

Chapter End Notes

I hope you didn't think it would be *that* easy :3

Chapter 55: Cutting the shackles.

Chapter Summary

The commission tries a different tactic.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hawks made his feathers swirl around the cafeteria, resulting in several exclamations of wonder from the rest of the group, as well as some focused scribbling from Izuku. The quiet buzz of anxiety that had formed from being cooped up in UA was slowly fading, as they had gotten into an almost routine over the past four days. And Hawks had finally gotten to know his fellow heroes after the first whirlwind of a day kept them all busy. The swarm outside the gates had just begun to lessen, as people slowly realised that no amount of badgering was going to get them their story. He was genuinely amazed that it had taken this long, but at least they knew, thanks to various social media posts, that the commission headquarters was getting the same treatment.

He'd agreed to show off his quirk to alleviate some boredom, and after some begging from Izuku, but really there wasn't much to do while stuck indoors. They'd already gone through every activity they could safely do, and tried a few they couldn't before the adults stopped them. But really, this was going on for too long. Part of him understood the griping, maybe they *could* be allowed into the grounds at least, but another part of him completely understood the caution being taken, and he was sure the others did as well or else they'd have tried to sneak out by now.

He looked up as his feathers formed a whirlwind of bright red, like leaves in autumn, floating around to a non-existent breeze. In the centre of the mass there were several feathers dancing around each other in an intricate pattern that he was really just making up on the spot. Izuku was still furiously writing in their notebook, Hawks had taken a look in it yesterday, and it seemed utterly incomprehensible, written in some kind of code that Izuku had offered to teach him *after* this was all over. Hawks understood why, he'd seen them explain their analyses before and he was sure people would *love* to get their hands

on some of those notes, particularly for the underground heroes. The others were far more active, walking around in the storm, admiring his feathers close up, although not touching them, which he appreciated. Natsuo in particular, had made it his mission to learn how each type of feather was important to flight, and to be able to identify them without a guide, he wasn't doing all that well so far. Hawks had asked why, and Natsuo said that he wouldn't be much of a med student if he didn't know how to help his friends when they got hurt.

Shoto walked up to him and leaned against his side, watching the display with a smile on his face. That was another thing Hawks had to get used to, all the casual physical contact within the family, it seemed that if any of them were near each other, they'd be touching in some way. At first, it seemed that there was no hesitation or reason to this, but then he started noticing certain patterns, like how Izuku, Fuyumi, Touya, Aizawa, Kan, Kayama, and Takeda were never approached without warning. Or that Shoto, Inui, Katou, and Yamada seemed to constantly seek out contact. The Iida brothers and Majima seemed very inconsistent as to when people could approach them, but Hawks wondered if there was a tell he was missing. The rest of them seemed fairly normal in this particular regard, but he suspected that was simply because he had yet to spend much time with them. Hawks himself had slowly grown comfortable with these habits, to the point where he'd found himself unconsciously drifting closer to anyone near him.

He sighed and pulled his feathers back to his wings, starting to get bored of the display. Not to mention how late it was getting.

"Do you guys think the last of the reporters have finally got the hint?" He asked.

"Probably," Fuyumi said, "then again, journalists can be, *oddly persistent.*"

Touya scoffed "that's a kind way of putting it, I bet those damn vultures can still smell their story, they're just going to wait until we stop hiding, especially with Keigo here."

"Or whenever people start getting arrested," Hawks sighed, "what *are* we going to do after this anyways? I mean, yeah, Nedzu said he'd handle the legal stuff, but..."

"You're worried about what you're going to do, right?" Izuku asked.

Hawks nodded “I mean, I can still be a hero, I have my license, but, I don’t know if I’d want people seeing me and, well, could you imagine? They’d want to know everything.” He shuddered, one of the things the heroes had promised was that he didn’t have to speak up if he didn’t want to, and he was very glad to take them up on that offer.

“I mean, you aren’t a public hero yet, you could just wait.” Tenya said.

“Wait?” Hawks asked, “why would I?”

“You know how the news is, give it a year, they’ll forget all about this, at least enough to leave you alone.” Tenya shrugged, “I mean it’s just an option, and it wouldn’t even be that weird, a lot of heroes don’t make their full debuts until their twenties.”

“I mean, I guess.” Hawks wasn’t sure he would ever escape this, but Tenya was right, it would be better to wait. “But I want to help people! And I don’t think I could just stand by and wait.” Now more than ever.

“Think about it Keigo!” Izuku signed enthusiastically, “you could just live normally for a while! Do the stuff the commission wouldn’t let you!” Hawks smiled, well, that *was* a very good reason, and perhaps he’d finally-

“Hey! Kids!” All of them turned to the sudden shout. Kurose stood at the entrance of the room, fully dressed in their hero costume. Hawks was immediately on high alert, and he saw the others stiffen as well.

“Bibi Anan?” Tenya asked, “what’s going on?”

“Someone’s attempting to get past the barrier, *stay put and stay together*, we’re going to handle it.” They said sternly.

“Is it a reporter?” Shoto asked, wishing for a sliver of hope.

Kurose shook their head “unlikely, unless it’s normal to for a group of twenty reporters to have guns and explosives.” Hawks shuddered, the commission was *desperate* and that never boded well for their targets.

Kurose caught his fear “relax Keigo, they’ll have to go through us first, just stay inside and run if you need to.” An annoyed shout echoed from near the exit and Kurose ran to catch up with the other heroes.

Hawks looked to the others, who seemed about as panicked as he was.

“What do we do? We can’t help them.”

Touya nodded “we can’t, but we *can* make this place a bit harder to get into.” He looked around at the open cafeteria with its windows and wide-open door.

“Maybe we should find somewhere easier to fortify?” Natsuo suggested.

Izuku shook their head, “all the other rooms are small; we can’t afford to fight in them. Keigo and Tenya need space to move, Touya and Shoto’s quirks are essentially crowd control, my best skills are stealth and agility, and we won’t have our escape routes cut off.”

“So let’s stop yapping and start doing something!” Touya snapped “Birdie, Natsu, Yumi, help me get these chairs and maybe we could move tables.”

“Actually, you three get the chairs, I can get the tables on my own” Hawks said, sending his feathers to lift a few tables at a time and move them to the base of the windows, forming some cover they could duck behind in addition to the partitions. He also left a few feathers scattered around hiding spots to feel for any vibrations.

Touya gave him a thumbs up and joined his siblings in grabbing the chairs to block the door, as well as remove any tripping hazards. Izuku raided the cafeteria kitchen for weapons, mostly knives, and got their wraith outfit out of their backpack; seriously, did that kid not go *anywhere* without that thing? Tenya was running around checking the windows for any sign of the intruders; and Shoto was helping Tenya as best he could.

They stood around with bated breath, waiting for anything to happen, and desperately hoping that nothing did. Suddenly, the intercom crackled to life, startling them, “children, I advise you to run, some HPSC agents managed to slip away from the conflict, only about five of them, but the heroes are still occupied with the rest,” Nedzu’s voice sounded far less sharp than usual, if Hawks were to place it, he might call it concern.

A gunshot sounded and they all ducked behind cover just in time to avoid the bullet that lodged itself in one of the partitions. Hawks took to the air as a bull crashed through the glass, then transformed into a commission agent, gun pointed at the nearest person, Natsuo. Four other agents followed, each walked past the first agent with weapons pointed at the others. Hawks looked at his friends, Izuku, Shoto,

Tenya, and Touya were grouped together and ready to fight, they just needed an opening. Fuyumi was peeking out from behind a partition, staring wide eyed at Natsuo who seemed equally terrified. The first agent spoke, “nobody move, or else.”

They couldn’t talk, couldn’t communicate in any way without the agents shooting, they needed those guns out of the way.

Hawks carefully moved some feathers from behind tables to be close enough that he could take out the guns in one fell swoop, although that might not stop them from firing. He shared a look with the others, hoping desperately that they could understand that he was about to do something. He almost grinned when he saw frost slowly start to build on Shoto’s arm.

Hawks sliced the hands of the agents who dropped their weapons in shock. An ice wall appeared just in time to stop most of the stray bullets. A scream echoed out and Natsuo clutched his leg, the gun falling right beside him. Hawks’ feathers quickly scattered the guns away from the fight.

One of the agents sneered in frustration, using her quirk to sharpen her fingers, running at the group as the other agents also activated their quirks. Shoto attempted to widen the ice wall but another agent seemed to absorb the cold, preventing the ice from forming. Touya was stuck with the sharp lady who dodged his fire and quickly moved closer, managing to gash his shoulder, barely missing his neck, before getting a face full of fire and being forced to retreat. Meanwhile Izuku was playing keep away with the first agent who had turned back into a bull, he managed to land a hit on their leg, but they were still running away. Hawks dived at the agents threatening Natsuo and Fuyumi, kicking one away before being punched in the face by the other.

“Hawks. You’re lucky Madame wants you alive.” The agent, who he now recognized as one of his handlers, raised a hand, and a small ball of energy gathered at her fingertips, forming into the shape of a gun, aimed at the siblings behind him. “Now move, and maybe I’ll have mercy on you.”

“No,” Hawks used his wings to shield Fuyumi and Natsuo. He could still hear the sounds of fighting, but his focus narrowed to the agent in front of him.

“What’s the point in this? You are our agent, you are Hawks, and

that's what you'll always be." Hawks resisted the urge to cower, she was right, all the public would ever see him as would be the commission's soldier. But not everybody, he glanced at the others, all fighting, and slowly loosing, because they tried to help him. He made himself a promise and he wasn't going to back down now.

"You might have given me that name, but it no longer belongs to you, *I* do not belong to you." He flared his wings proudly.

"*Hawks-*"

"My *name* is Keigo," he snapped, and to his own surprise, he actually meant it, it was a name he hadn't ever used for himself until now. But it was *his*, it was the name his friends gave back to him, and he'd be damned if he let the commission take it from him again.

"I see." The agent tightened her grip on the gun, "no matter, we can retrain you after we eliminate them."

"Over my dead body" He snarled.

"Alright then." Three gunshots rang out, and Keigo felt a sharp pain in his side as he fell to his knees, he looked up to see the agent cursing with bullet holes in both arms and the energy gun completely gone.

A loud yell knocked everyone to the ground and the ones closest to the broken window were encased in red. The heroes had arrived.

Iida was the first into the building, rushing to his brother, or rather, limping, as Keigo could see various gashes in his armour. The floor seemed to turn fluid, cement moving to restrain the other agents. Keigo turned around and saw that all the heroes looked rather beat up.

He smiled as the others rushed to their family, tears in everyone's eyes and a flurry of words as people tried to figure out just how hurt everyone was. It seemed that most of them, while hurt, could still walk. Natsuo tried to move but was instead carried by Kan, who was making sure not to jostle his leg, and now that Keigo had time to look, it seemed the bullet had hit Natsuo's knee.

Keigo stood up, quickly regretting it as the wound in his side caused him to double over in pain, vision swimming as he tried not to fall over. A hand steadied him, he leaned into it and got an amused woof in return as Inui carefully picked him up.

He looked back at the agents, who were now all restrained with concrete, and a copy of Katou stood in the middle, keeping an eye on them all.

The commission had *failed*. They'd failed to get him back.

The heroes had won. His friends, his family, had *won*.

He was finally free.

Chapter End Notes

DOWN WITH THE COMMISSION!!! *OFF WITH THEIR HEADS!!!*

Chapter 56: Some much needed rest.

Chapter Summary

The aftermath of the attack on UA.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The infirmary was completely packed, not having been designed for more than a handful of people at a time. Keigo sat in one of the beds, trying to keep his wings from knocking into whoever was near him. The only person who wasn't here was Fuyumi, who had somehow avoided injury altogether, she was speaking with Nedzu in the hallway. Meanwhile, everyone else was being mildly scolded by Shuzenji whenever they tried to move too much. Some of them had taken minimal damage, Katou, Ishiyama, and Shoto were dismissed rather quickly, only needing a quick kiss on the cheek from Shuzenji. Meanwhile the rest of them were subject to being extremely tired after Shuzenji's quirk worked its magic, and most of them *still* had to get stitches. All of them had a few major injuries that, when compounded with the numerous minor ones, simply couldn't be healed. Yamada had taken a bullet to the arm; Kurose had three broken ribs after being thrown into a tree; Inui had lines of energy burns from a restraining quirk, both Iidas had overheated their engines; Takeda had large claw marks in his leg; Izuku's elbows and wrists got sprained when their staff got snatched away; Touya's burns had worsened from using his quirk without support gear; Natsuo's knee had been shattered; Kayama had been stabbed with a serrated sword; Majima had a concussion after a grenade destroyed xyr tech; and it was a sheer miracle that Aizawa and Kan were still standing.

Keigo held back a hiss of pain when Tenya accidentally bumped into him, silently hoping that he could just *leave* soon, he was sure that the classroom would be a fine place to rest. He sat still as Shuzenji expertly stitched up the wound in his side. Eventually, most of them got dismissed from the infirmary with *strict* instructions to avoid exerting themselves, although a few heroes still had to stay behind. The children returned to the 1-C classroom, Izuku appeared rather irritated at being unable to use their arms, and Touya and Fuyumi stuck near Natsuo, who was having some trouble figuring out how to use crutches.

It might have only just turned morning, but Keigo honestly felt like sleeping the day away, so when they got back, he curled up into the blanket nest they'd been sleeping in. He heard Touya laugh "don't worry, you get used to RG's quirk after some time," his voice was raspier, Keigo wondered if the burns weren't the only damage his quirk did.

"Shut up Ashes, I wanna sleep" Keigo grumbled, pulling a blanket over his head.

"Yeah yeah, move over," Touya nudged him aside, only for Izuku to steal the spot next to Keigo. "Oi! That's mine you little gremlin!"

Izuku giggled and started to sign before quickly being reminded that moving their arms was painful. They sighed, sticking their tongue out at Touya instead.

Touya sighed and moved over to Keigo's other side, burying his face in Keigo's wings. After some time the others joined them, Natsuo gave up on lying down and leaned against Fuyumi, Tenya and Shoto were snuggled up to Izuku, and Keigo was slightly squished in the middle, it didn't take long for all of them to fall asleep, one by one.

Keigo didn't like interrogations, not when he was sitting across the table, the person in front of him morphing through familiar faces, criminals, civilians, and heroes alike. He didn't like the way they all stared at him, eyes glossed over and blood dripping from their necks, silent accusations filling the air. Strings tied him in place, wings stretched out, forcing him to face his sins. Worst of all, were the last few faces, three heroes and four kids, all coloured with life, unlike the others. He'd tried to kill them, would have killed two of them if he wasn't ordered otherwise. The accusations were no longer silent, no longer something he could ignore, and he knew they were coming from his own mouth. The strings tightened, the person morphed one last time, into a small child, starved and beaten with bright red wings turned dull from dirt, clutching a plush to his chest, and he stared until his eyes turned glassy like the others.

Keigo woke up to something pulling at his wings, his heart was beating so loud he could feel it, he hadn't had a nightmare like that in years. The afternoon sun was shining through the windows, bathing everything in gold. He tried to move his wings around, but a pair of hands gripped the feathers tightly, and he heard the soft sounds of a kid sniffling, it seemed he wasn't the only one having bad dreams. He shuffled his wings again, reaching behind him to pry the hands from his wings.

“Hey! Wake up!” Keigo whisper yelled, but apparently it wasn’t nearly quiet enough as Izuku also woke up, looking even more tired than they’d been that morning. The hands suddenly let go of Keigo’s wings.

“Sorry Birdie, did I hurt you?” Touya asked, sleep making his voice rough.

“A bit, it’s fine.” Keigo moved so that he was now laying on his back, turning his head to talk to Touya.

Touya chuckled bitterly, “damn nightmares.”

Keigo had to laugh with him “yeah, looks like nobody’s sleeping well.”

Touya sighed and sat up, stretching, he then winced when the motion aggravated his burns. “Damn, haven’t felt that in a while.”

Keigo laughed lightly “careful Ashes, or you’re gonna have to go back to looking like a weird Frankenstein’s monster with all those staples.”

“I regret ever showing you that picture.”

Keigo stood up, flexing his wings and straightening the feathers that Touya had pulled at. He heard shuffling and looked to see that Izuku had started waking the others, “morning everyone, or, evening I should say,” he yawned, walking around the room to wake himself up.

“Geez, how long did we sleep?” Natsuo asked, squinting at the light pouring through the window.

“A while, apparently,” Fuyumi answered, helping him stand.

The three kids were still cuddled together, although Izuku was trying to shove the other two out of the blankets, much to Shoto’s dismay. Keigo chuckled at the display and Izuku gave him a glare that almost matched their dad’s, it was close enough to make him shut up. He returned to staring out of the window, talking to the others, and laughing as several of them forgot they were injured while trying to do things.

There was a knock on the door and Kayama walked in “oh, hello dears, you’re up.” She seemed surprised.

“Did you expect us to sleep longer?” Tenya asked, slightly confused.

“Oh no, Chiyo’s quirk is just unpredictable, only she knows how much energy it uses, and she almost never tells us.” She pouted “personally I

think she just enjoys the guessing games we like to play."

Izuku giggled moving closer to whisper in Kayama's ear, an accusatory look on their face. She laughed "guilty as charged, by the way, did you guys just wake up?" When Izuku nodded she frowned cursing under her breath. They looked amused, but she shook her head, smirking, "oh no, I was smart enough not to bet on this one. But Hirohito's going to be annoyingly smug about this."

"Well, thanks for checking in on us anyways," Fuyumi smiled.

"Oh, that's not the only reason, have you kids checked the news yet?" She asked grinning sharply.

"No?" Keigo said, while Touya frantically checked his phone.

"*Holy shit.*" Touya cackled, joined by Kayama.

"What? *What?*" Shoto strained to see Touya's phone.

Eventually all of them managed to get a look at the screen, only to see every credible news site calling for the commission to take accountability. The fight had ended, and it seemed the public had picked their side, with the exception of a few idiots. Keigo stared, he wouldn't have believed it if he didn't know exactly how desperate the commission must have been last night. "*Finally*. What did them in?"

Kayama smiled deviously "oh, Nedzu may or may not have brought up the whole, 'attack,' to some people, and oh boy were folks pissed about that."

"But it's been less than a day?" Tenya pointed out incredulously.

Kayama shrugged "I guess people were waiting for someone to cross the line, and the commission made their move."

This was amazing, the all-powerful HPSC, brought to its knees by hubris. Keigo couldn't decide if he wanted to cheer or cry, and his brain settled on a slightly insane laugh. The others looked a bit concerned, but he shook his head. "I, I don't even know what to say." He smiled "they're actually gone."

Kayama nodded "yep, with the way everything is going, everyone who worked on the project is going to be arrested within the week, I think that just excludes the office workers from the other departments. Right?"

“Pretty much,” Keigo was still grinning like a kid, it would be everyone who worked with Madame President, and it would be all of their spec ops agents, probably a decent chunk of security as well, and the scientists and doctors that helped with the testing. He knew that some of those people had retired by now, with how long the project had been going, but he wouldn’t be surprised if each of them got a home visit in the near future. He hugged Kayama, careful of her injuries. “Thank you” he whispered, the tears finally starting to fall.

“Don’t worry about it hon,” Kayama gently wiped the tears from his face, “you’re one of us, and we always take care of our own.”

“Still, *thank you*, for everything, even after what I’ve done.” Keigo felt someone else press against him, he looked down to see Izuku smiling up at him.

They leaned over and whispered something to Kayama, and she nodded “Izuku says that what you did isn’t as important as what you’re going to do now that you’re free, and I know the rest of us agree.”

Keigo smiled, more tears trailing down his cheeks, what he was going to do now? “I think I’ll lay low for a while, but I know one thing, I’m not going to quit being a hero.”

Kayama laughed “I’m not surprised, people like us rarely do.”

Tenya cleared his throat “I’m sorry to interrupt Aunt Nemuri, but, now that the commission isn’t a threat, does that mean we can go home?”

“Yep, although I should warn you Tenya, your parents haven’t been too happy about you getting yourself in trouble.” Kayama grimaced.

“Oh” Tenya looked ashamed “I suppose they would be, looks like I’m getting grounded.”

“Wait, what about us?” Fuyumi asked, “father has been trying to contact us for days, he’s not going to just let this slide.” Keigo ruffled his feathers, *Endeavour*, the bastard had started calling Nedzu for answers after Fuyumi and Natsuo ignored him.

“My apartment has a guest room,” Touya interjected, “you could just come and stay with me, Natsu already spends half his time there anyways.”

Shoto smiled “so we finally get to live with our big brother?”

“Did you think I was just going to let you lot go back to the estate? Fuck no.” Touya hugged his siblings protectively.

Kayama smiled at the siblings, then she turned to Keigo “what about you sweetie?”

“Huh?’ Keigo asked, slightly confused.

“I doubt you have a place to stay outside of the commission,” she explained, “but I’m sure you could stay with one of us for a while.”

Keigo shrugged, he hadn’t really thought that far ahead, but he wasn’t sure he *wanted* to deal with the other heroes on a daily basis. They were lovely, but he *did* try to kill two of their friends, and he already had trouble talking to them without wanting to apologize a million times over.

Touya suddenly pulled him into the group hug “Birdie’s with us.”

“What? Wait, do you even have enough space in your apartment for five people!?” Keigo asked, mildly concerned.

Touya shrugged “eh, we can figure something out.”

“But, *why?*” Keigo asked, as far as he knew, there was no special attachment any of the Todorokis had to him.

“Would you rather stay with any of the heroes?” Touya asked, and it seemed like he already knew the answer.

“Alright, you win Ashes,” Keigo conceded, acting like he was accepting his fate, even though the grin on his face was impossible to hide.

Things were finally going their way, Keigo wasn’t a soldier any more, and the people that hurt him were going to get their dues. The Todorokis seemed happy as well, Endeavour couldn’t contact them, had no idea where they were and, now that the commission was being thoroughly investigated, he had nobody to protect him from their new family’s wrath.

It looked like everything was going to be smooth sailing from here.

Chapter End Notes

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Chapter 57: Embers of Blue, Flames of Orange.

Chapter Summary

> Touya has a totally normal day and there's absolutely nobody we're forgetting about ;3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The problem with having siblings, was that while they were kind to you, they also had no qualms about pissing you off for entertainment. Touya stared impatiently at Shoto, who had somehow gotten his hands on Touya's jacket, and climbed on top of the kitchen cabinets, just out of reach.

"Come on you little gremlin!" Touya was in the middle of dragging a chair from the living room into the kitchen, "don't make me come up there." Shoto just smiled, aimed his hand and froze the chair to the floor. "Are you *fucking kidding me!?*."

Touya heard Natsuo and Keigo laughing behind him, he turned to glare at the two, who could be *helping* him instead of being draped over the couch. He grumbled and started melting the ice, trying not to set the chair on fire, "I swear, if Fuyumi gets home and *this* is what she has to deal with, I'm going to revoke your soba privileges."

That certainly got Shoto's attention. "Wait! Not the soba!" He hopped off the cabinet, landing clumsily on the floor and Touya promptly snatched up his jacket, holding it far out of reach.

Shoto pouted at him, but didn't say a word. Touya sighed, *kids*. The last week had been a challenge, adjusting to living with other people again, not just having visitors. Touya was glad he at least didn't have to share a room with them, well, he shared with Fuyumi, but Fuyumi wasn't an absolute nightmare to share things with unless the kitchen was involved. Unlike Shoto and Natsuo who, along with Keigo, had claimed the guest room and accidently froze the door shut *twice* while trying to kill a spider. Keigo was simultaneously less of a problem, and the worst nuisance of the lot, he wasn't one to start problems, usually content to sit back and enjoy the show, but he wasn't above saying things just to stir the pot.

Touya was *very* glad that he and Fuyumi worked different shifts, so at

least one of them was always home, otherwise he was sure something would have broken by now. He sighed and sat down on the couch, shoving Keigo's wings out of his space, 'accidentally' causing Keigo to fall onto Natsuo. He got a pair of glares for that, but he just grinned "oops."

Natsuo huffed, "whatever." He went back to frantically working on an essay that was due way earlier than he had expected, he stared at the essay sighing. "This is so fucking stupid."

Touya leaned over his shoulder "what? Let me see."

Keigo laughed "I wouldn't worry about it Ashes, Natsuo's just pissed he can't ask anyone for help until tomorrow."

"Just use google?" Touya suggested.

"No, I need this to be co-ordinated with my group, and I can't even *text* them!" Natsuo waved his phone in Touya's face, deliberately turned *off*. It was annoying, the only phone that was allowed to be turned on in the apartment was Touya's, since apparently the other two could be tracked. The only time Natsuo or Fuyumi had their phones on was at school or work, when they were safe from Endeavour randomly showing up to make a fuss. They had that much at least, the knowledge that the old man was too cowardly to start shit if it would hurt his public image.

Keigo's wings suddenly fluffed up, and he scrambled off the couch, beelining for the front door. Touya figured he'd picked something up from one of the many feathers scattered around the apartment, they were everywhere. Touya doubted Keigo's claim that there were only fifteen feathers through the apartment, there *had* to be more than that, or maybe he just moved them around every day? Either way, it was nowhere near as amusing as Keigo thought it was when somebody got spooked by finding one.

Keigo stood patiently by the door when the lock clicked open, jumping on Fuyumi the second she walked through the door.

"Keigo!" She exclaimed in surprise. Keigo grinned and dragged her over to the others. "Wait! Goodness, at least let me put my things away," she chuckled, leaving her bag and phone on the table.

Touya breathed a sigh of relief "finally, I was worried I'd be late for work."

“You *can* leave us alone you know, we won’t burn anything down,” Natsuo pointed out.

“Hm, no, you’re the only person here who has basic life skills and, well,” Fuyumi half-heartedly gestured to Natsuo’s knee, which still wasn’t healed all the way.

“Hey! I’m getting pretty good with this!” Natsuo protested, grabbing the cane Shuzenji had given him and standing up, a bit hastily with a stumble, “see!”

Keigo extended his wing to prevent Natsuo from falling, “yeah, well, maybe learn how to walk well before you try to show off.”

Natsuo shrugged “hey, if RG’s right about me having a permanent limp, then technically I have all the time in the world to get used to this thing.”

Touya threw on his jacket and laced up his boots, “well you four have fun, I’ve got to go deal with the *joy* of retail work, my manager is going to lose her shit if I’m late.”

Shoto frowned, “are you still in trouble?”

“Yeah, she’s *still* pissed at me for taking that week-long break while we were dealing with the commission.” Touya hugged Fuyumi and Natsuo, fist-bumped Keigo, and ruffled Shoto’s hair.

“Alright Ashes, have fun with the Karens! See ya later!” Keigo practically shoved Touya out of the door, he barely had enough time to grab his phone from the table.

Weird.

Touya suspected that they were planning something, but as long as Fuyumi was there, surely they wouldn’t burn anything down while he was gone. He jogged down the street as the evening light bathed everything in golden light, barely stopping to acknowledge familiar faces, and getting to the convenience store just as the day shift was leaving.

He got a glare from his co-worker at the register, he gave a shrug in response “sorry I’m late, my siblings were being nuisances.”

“Whatever, just don’t get the rest of us in trouble.” Touya nodded and hurried off to start stocking shelves. One issue with having almost all

your work experience tied to a clearly fake name? It was near impossible to find a job. Luckily, the manager here was a bit more *lenient* about stuff like that, in exchange for working him to the bone, after all, what was he going to do? Quit?

By the time they were allowed to take a break Touya was about ready to punch the next idiot who tried to ask him where something was without telling him exactly what they were looking for. He took a deep breath, he wasn't actually going to start anything, he was not going to get himself fired any time soon. He glanced at the time on his phone, only four more hours of this, then he could go home and sleep. He went to check the news, even if he was getting a more detailed play by play from Kurose, it was always entertaining to see when the media finally said something about an arrest. Huh, did the screen look different? Before he could think on that further, he heard his manager yelling for everyone to get back to work, so he shoved his phone back in his pocket and went back to the hell that was dealing with tired and angry customers.

Finally, just as he wondered if he was going to go insane, his shift was over, and there was *not a single chance* he was sticking around to do overtime today. He said goodbye to his co-workers and walked out of the store. He checked his phone again, *now* he could catch up on the news, he opened the phone and...

Oh fuck.

The wallpaper being a picture of the latest pop album was the biggest clue, this was *Fuyumi's* phone, and it had been on the entire time he was working. Touya started to panic, it was late, sure, but there was no reason that *he* couldn't have noticed Fuyumi's phone being somewhere it wasn't supposed to be. Worse, *it was late*, there was nobody out on the streets, no chance for Touya to slip into a crowd, no chance that he wouldn't be confronted. He had to get home, *fast*.

He sprinted as fast as he could towards the apartment, every sound barely heard and movement seen out of the corner of his eye sending him into a panic. He got only halfway before running out of breath, he stood in the middle of the street, doubled over as he caught his breath, terror clouding his mind as the world around him seemed to spin. It wasn't until he stopped and tried to get his bearings did he realise he had taken the long way around, and that he had much further to go than he had realised.

The phone in his pocket started ringing, *shit*, he'd forgotten to turn it

off. He heard a set of heavy footsteps behind him. He was in an alley way, cornered, no witnesses. Whirling around, hands raised and embers threatening to erupt from his skin, he faced Endeavor.

“What the fuck do you want?” Touya demanded.

The ringing in Touya’s pocket stopped, and Endeavor spoke with barely contained rage “who are you, and *why* do you have my daughter’s phone?”

“That’s none of your fucking business asshole,” Touya let sparks fly.

Endeavour took a step forward, and Touya was reminded exactly how much smaller he was in comparison, it made him *furious*. “Listen here boy, do you realise who you’re talking to?” Touya’s blood was boiling, the last time Endeavour had talked to him like this was the day before the forest fire, and he was not happy about being reminded.

“Yeah, the number two douchebag of a hero,” Touya spat, “how’s permanent second place treating you anyways?”

“Why you *insolent*.” Endeavour grabbed Touya by the arm, almost lifting him into the air.

Touya reflexively punched him with a flaming fist, causing Endeavour to drop him, he summoned more flames around himself to form a barricade, criss-crossing the flames to ensure even Endeavour couldn’t break through. Endeavour glared at him, then, his eyes widened as he saw the pattern of the blue fire. And Touya realised his mistake.

“Where the hell did you learn that?” Endeavour growled, the light from his own orange flames overpowering Touya’s blue glow. That pattern, the one that he learned to combat Endeavour’s rages, the one Endeavour knew as *Touya’s*. Touya reached into his pocket, he couldn’t get out of this one, not anymore, no matter what he said, Endeavour was bound to figure out that Touya was alive, whether he realised that Touya was right in front of him or not. He found Fuyumi’s phone and blindly dialled the first number that came to mind, turning down the volume so that Endeavour, and Touya, wouldn’t be able to hear anything from the other side.

“Take a wild guess *old man*” Touya grinned, he was sure he looked insane.

“No.” Endeavour looked equal parts horrified and enraged.

Touya laughed, he thought he might start crying if he still could, “what? You don’t recognize your first-born *failure*?” He was absolutely going to get some reprimanding for that wording; but right now? He couldn’t care less, he wanted to make sure Endeavour knew *exactly* who he was dealing with.

“Touya?”

“What? Are you surprised you bastard?” Touya couldn’t help the rage that seeped into his voice, “or maybe you’re disappointed that I’m alive after all, I wouldn’t be shocked.”

“Where are your siblings? Why won’t you come home?” Endeavour demanded.

*“Are you **fucking** kidding me!?”* Touya snapped, now fully yelling, “after everything you’ve done, you expect us to just *come home*? How fucking *stupid* can you be?”

The orange flames overtook the blue, surrounding Touya in a familiar nightmare as Endeavour’s yelling became the only thing he could hear “I made you strong! I taught you to be great!”

“You taught us to live *your* dream,” Touya yelled back, blue flames futilely trying to push back the orange, “you weren’t good enough to be number one so you decided to ruin *our* lives instead!”

“You ungrateful brat! You will see. I *will* bring you home, and then I’ll find your siblings as well.” The orange flames grew suffocatingly close, and Touya found himself violently thrown between the alleyway he was standing in, and the forest where he was abandoned. He stumbled, and the blue flames disappeared altogether as Endeavor approached, seeming to tower over Touya in a way he hadn’t before. Touya cowered as Endeavour lifted him by the neck, the smell of burning flesh filling the air. He struggled, scratching, kicking, screaming, but all of his training seemed to have been forgotten as the world slowly grew darker. Eventually, he felt himself go limp, the fight leaving his body as he returned to being a fourteen-year-old boy trapped in a burning forest. A thick liquid ran down his cheeks, the smell of blood filling the air.

I guess I can *cry after all.*

Chapter End Notes

:3

evil cackling

Chapter 58: Dousing the flames.

Chapter Summary

Aizawa gets a call.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shouta was honestly just glad that he was finally cleared to go on patrol, he was sure him and Izuku were going to go stir crazy if it took any longer. Now, Chiyo had suggested, in other words made them swear on their life under threat of disappointment, that they were *not* going to get into any fights that would risk them getting too hurt or exhausted. And if there was one thing you didn't do in this family, you *never* disappointed Chiyo.

He heard the front door open as he finished changing into his costume, but he wasn't fast enough to check before he heard an excited squeal from Izuku and a yell of "*papa!*"

Shouta chuckled as he walked into the living room to see Izuku practically hanging off of Hizashi's arm, luckily not the one that had been shot. "Sunshine! How was patrol?"

"Just as boring as the last few," Hizashi grumbled, deftly lifting Izuku up to hang off his back like a koala instead, "I guess I should be thankful for that, I can't believe my arm is *still* sore."

"Hey at least you've been *able* to patrol," Shouta pointed out, which seemed to snap Hizashi out of his complaining, putting a bright grin on his face.

"Oh right! Good luck tonight you two!" Hizashi pulled both of them into a hug, "you'll have to tell me everything that happens when you get back."

Shouta raised an eyebrow "if you don't fall asleep first."

Hizashi pouted, "aww, come on Shou, have a little more faith in me would ya!"

Shouta shook his head, kissing his husband on the cheek, “if we were taking about anything else, maybe.”

Izuku decided now was a good time to chime in with, “dad’s right, the last time you tried to stay up till the end of our patrol, you ended up asleep on the carpet.” Shouta laughed at the reminder.

Hizashi chuckled, “hey, don’t you have to get ready for patrol you little gremlin?”

Izuku nodded rapidly and scurried back to their room to change. Shouta smiled softly, “they’ve really grown into this whole ‘hero’ thing, haven’t they?”

Hizashi smirked, “getting sentimental now are we Moonlight?” Shouta glared at him, “I’m kidding, *mostly*.”

Hizashi leaned against Shouta, staring at the door to Izuku’s room with unfiltered pride. “You’re right, I mean, Izuku’s *always* had a hero’s spirit, but,” he chuckled, a hint of tears in his eyes “our little baby is already going above and beyond to save people, they’re going to be one of the best heroes when they grow up.”

“If only they’d stop giving us a near heart attack every time they did something,” Shouta sighed, putting his head on Hizashi’s shoulder, slightly askew to account for the speaker and jacket, “I swear we’re going to go grey before we turn thirty if this keeps up.”

“That’s the thing, isn’t it?” Hizashi’s hand intertwined with Shouta’s as he spoke, “they’re going to keep doing it, no matter what happens they’ll find a way, *any* way, to keep helping, *all* of us would, it’s what makes us heroes.”

Shouta laughed, tears welling up in his eyes, “*now* who’s getting sentimental?”

Hizashi smiled and kissed him, “still you.”

“Are you kidding me!?” the pair turned to see Izuku standing in their doorway, dressed in their costume, hands on their hips, “if you two are going to be all gross could you do it *after* patrol?”

Hizashi laughed “it was just a kiss Izuku, there’s no need to act so offended.”

“You’re my *parents*,” Izuku grumbled, as if that explained everything.

Shouta shook his head, putting a hand over Hizashi's mouth as he tried to say something else "alright, we should get going."

He held back a frustrated sigh as his phone started ringing, who the hell was calling him so late? He checked the caller id.

That was odd, Fuyumi almost never called him, not unless it was an emergency. He cursed under his breath, and Izuku and Hizashi crowded around as well, recognizing the urgency in his voice, he answered the phone. "Hey-"

He didn't get a single word in before he heard *Touya* speaking, his voice was muffled, as if being heard through layers of something, but the faint crackling of fire was unmistakable. "Take a wild guess, *old man*"

Shouta's nerves were immediately on high alert, Izuku scrambled onto the windowsill, ready to take off running given permission, Shouta nodded, keeping close to them with Hizashi not far behind. There was only one person Touya called 'old man', and if their suspicions were correct, they had to find the siblings, *fast.*

Shouta kept his phone on, keeping tabs on the situation, he heard an even more muffled voice mutter something, but it was too quiet to make out what was said. He scanned the city as they ran across the rooftops, searching for signs of the fire he could hear crackling away in the background. He heard the sound of Touya laughing, a noise which nearly made him flinch with how *detached* it sounded. "What, you don't recognize your first-born *failure*?" Shouta took a deep breath, resisting the urge to yell at Touya for calling himself a failure, that would be an incredibly stupid reason to let Endeavour know that other people were listening to their argument.

Hizashi let out a low whistle, catching the attention of the other two, "isn't it about time for Touya to be going home from work?"

Izuku nodded "yeah, let's head towards the convenience store, search from there," they suggested, easily slipping between JSL for the specific details, and a set of hand signals used by underground heroes for silent and fast, if rudimentary, communication.

"We should probably check further along the path, Endeavour won't attack with civilians around," Hizashi followed suit, leaving half his sentence undecipherable to the average person.

Shouta fell back, letting Izuku and Hizashi take the lead as he focused

on the sounds of the altercation, and not falling off a building. He heard Touya's voice, seething with rage "or maybe you're disappointed that I'm alive after all, I wouldn't be shocked."

Shouta finally heard Endeavour's unpleasantly arrogant voice, "where are your siblings?"

Shouta's mind raced, so it was just Touya? Then why did he have Fuyumi's phone? And somewhere with that fear and worry, a tiny bit of pride at the fact that Touya had somehow managed to call for help on his own without alerting Endeavour. He clicked his tongue, "only one civilian, be ready to fight," he signalled.

The other two nodded, still scanning the area. Izuku suddenly veered off to the left with a simple gesture, "target spotted." Shouta followed them, barely glancing to see a faint glow of orange and blue in the near distance.

The three of them seamlessly slipped into their hero personas as their focus narrowed to the mission. Shouta could hear the argument between Touya and Endeavour get louder and more aggressive. The mix of colours turning completely orange, and then the screaming started. Shouta ended the call, there wasn't much more information that would be helpful and he didn't need his attention divided, he raised his hand to give the signal for a compromised civilian, but by the look of utter *rage* on Present Mic's face and the fidgety sharpness in Wraith's movements, the two of them had heard the last few seconds.

Shouta took the lead, blood boiling as he felt his quirk behind his eyes, threatening to activate out of anger. The extra noise filtered out of his senses, zeroing in on that orange glow as the trio landed on the rooftop overlooking the alleyway. Present Mic immediately stopped moving, letting his stealthier teammates get a look at the situation. And Shouta nearly screamed when he saw Endeavour holding Touya by the neck, the smell of smoke filling the air, and what looked like blood dripping down Touya's face. Shouta glanced at Wraith and Present Mic for barely a second, checking that they understood what he was about to do, before turning his quirk to Endeavour, extinguishing the flames much to the bastard's shock.

"What the-"

Before he could finish that sentence he was dropkicked by a tiny green blur. Wraith quickly got out of swinging range, letting Shouta drop

down, using his capture weapon to restrain Endeavour, next to him, Present Mic ran in close, kicking Endeavour's knees out from under him, Shouta grinned, steel toed boots were *very* effective weapons if used right.

Wraith ran to Touya, who was still dazed by the looks of it, half carrying half dragging him away from the danger. The acrid smell of burnt flesh assaulted everyone's noses, and Shouta fought the urge to run to Touya and make sure he was alright. Izuku knew basic first aid, they could handle it.

Endeavour quickly recovered from the surprise, glowering at the two of them, "Present Mic, Eraserhead." Shouta was slightly surprised Endeavour even knew who he was, but he'd probably just checked the names of heroes who worked at UA.

Shouta glanced at Present Mic, asking him to take the lead, he got a hint of a grin in return and had to resist cackling wildly, "Endeavour, what's up man? We were just in the area and couldn't help but notice a little hubbub, what's goin' on here?" Even knowing it was an act, hearing Present Mic act so friendly to Endeavour was disconcerting. Shouta silently grited his teeth, there would be nothing gained by yelling at the bastard, not *yet* anyways.

"Don't play stupid, I know you and your colleagues are hiding my children from me," or they could do this the direct way, Shouta liked this better.

Hizashi frowned, the mask slipping away into well concealed fury. "Your children?" He asked, acting nonchalant, "you mean the ones that were hurt because of *your* actions?".

Endeavour sneered at him "you don't know what you're talking about Mic, I raised Shoto well, trained him to the best of my ability." Oh, Shouta was *pissed*, the fucking audacity to say that *Hizashi* didn't know what he was talking about? Hizashi, the man who stayed up late into the night with Izuku when they were too scared to fall asleep? Hizashi, the man who sang songs with Touya while teaching him new recipes? Hizashi was a kinder man and a better father than Endeavour could even *comprehend* being.

"Ignoring the fact that training should *never* leave that many injuries, what about your other kids?" Hizashi asked, "Fuyumi? Natsuo? *Touya?*"

"So you knew?" Endeavour narrowed his eyes, "of course, that brat is

the one who told you, isn't he?" He growled.

"That's neither here nor there, not that it matters who told," Hizashi glanced at Shouta silently checking how much longer he could hold his quirk, the answer was a second or two at best. Hizashi moved to physically block the kids as Shouta unravelled his capture weapon and blinked. Endeavour got to his feet but didn't reactivate his quirk, still, Shouta stayed at the ready, just in case.

There was a soft coughing sound as Touya finally snapped out of whatever daze he was in, staring up at Endeavour with hatred and fear. Izuku stood in front of him, with hand on their bo-staff and a defensive stance. "Don't you know when to give up old man?" Touya asked, "none of what I do needs your involvement, not anymore." Shouta felt pride swell in his heart, that's right kid, stand up for yourself, we're right here, he won't be able to hurt you.

"It *does*, because I am your *father*." Endeavor tried to step towards Touya, but Hizashi and Shouta blocked him, both now glaring full force at him. This man couldn't be called a father by anything but the most basic biological definition of the word. Shouta seethed in anger as he saw Touya barely flinch, he hated that he couldn't simply pick Touya up and carry him far away from this bastard.

Touya laughed bitterly "right, because you cared *so* much before."

Endeavour glowered at Touya, before turning to the heroes in his way, trying to intimidate them by getting into their personal space, "you will let me speak with my son-"

Shouta punched him in the face.

"You have no right to call him your son, not anymore," Shouta snapped, feeling a sadistic glee when he noticed that Endeavour's nose now had a trail of red dripping down, and his fist was coated in a smear of blood. He heard Touya choke back a laugh at the sight.

Endeavour snarled at him "you don't get to say that, what would someone like *you* know of raising a child." Shouta couldn't tell whether that was a jab at his demeanour, appearance, quirk, status as an underground hero, or all four, and frankly he didn't care.

"I know I'm doing better than you ever did," Shouta growled back.

"Whatever you think, that is still *my* son," Endeavour retorted. Shouta shared a look with Hizashi and Izuku, the three of them glanced at

Touya, silently asking permission. He gave a subtle nod.

Hizashi laughed sharply, “I think you’re mistaken Endeavour.”

“Touya is *our* son,” Shouta gave a feral grin, “and we’re never letting you hurt him again.”

“You can’t just do that,” Endeavour glared at them, “Touya is my flesh and blood.”

“And!?” Touya snapped, “last time I checked, I chose to be part of their family, not yours, that’s *my* dad and my pops, and there’s *nothing* you can do to change that.” Shouta’s grin softened a bit, Touya might just be calling them that to make a point to Endeavour, but it was still nice to hear.

Endeavour glared at him, but Shouta stepped backwards, shielding Touya, while Hizashi just grinned, “well, we better get going, we *will* see you *very* soon” he warned. Shouta activated his quirk, wrapping up Endeavour again and leaping to the rooftop as the other three made their way down the alleyways. After a few seconds he saw Izuku pop up two rooftops over and released Endeavour, dashing to the others. Thankfully, it seemed that Endeavour wasn’t going to put up more of a fight, probably scared that a chase would attract too much attention. *Coward.*

Shouta dropped into the alleyway where the others stood, Hizashi was examining Touya’s face with concern while Izuku looked horrified. Oh right, the blood. Shouta also tried to take a look, but they were all waved away by Touya.

“It’s fine, I swear, the bleeding stopped a little while ago, I think it came from my eyes,” he explained. And, as far as Shouta could see, he was right, the bleeding started at the corners of his eyes, right where his tear ducts should be.

“Still,” Izuku frowned, “we should get gran to look at that in the morning.”

Touya sighed and tried to rub away the now sticky line of blood “damn it, I thought I could stand up to him, it’s been years, and I’m so much stronger now, and then I just-”

Hizashi frowned and took a napkin from his pocket, wiping away as much of the blood as he could, “hey, don’t worry about it, you’re alright now and that’s all that matters.”

“But I was *scared*,” even now Touya was trembling slightly, “I got scared and I couldn’t even fight back.”

Shouta reached out a hand, running it through Touya’s hair after he leaned closer, “we all get scared kid, even heroes who have been doing this job for decades.”

Touya nodded silently, leaning against Shouta for comfort. Izuku hugged their brother, “don’t worry Tou, after Nedzu gets through with that dumpster fire, you won’t have to be scared again.”

Touya chuckled, ruffling their hair, “thanks ‘Zuku, I can’t wait to see the look on the old man’s face.”

Hizashi joined the hug, quietly rubbing circles into Touya’s back.

After about a minute, they broke apart. Hizashi sighed, “come on, we should get going, your siblings are probably worried by now.”

Touya nodded “yeah, you’re right.” He took a few steps and stumbled, Shouta caught him easily, frowning in worry. “Shit, sorry, guess I wasn’t as awake as I thought.”

Hizashi huffed in amusement, lifting Touya up into his arms, “alright then, up you go.” He turned to Shouta and Izuku “you two should probably go patrolling now, I’ll make sure this one gets home safe.”

“Not sure *this* is necessary pops" Touya grumbled, completely missing the way that Hizashi's face lit up.

“Oh it’s absolutely necessary,” he said as he started to walk away, and certainly, Touya could easily struggle out of that hold if he wanted to.

Shouta smiled softly at the sight as he called Touya’s phone, which he assumed was with Fuyumi, letting her know that something had happened, yes it was dealt with, and Hizashi and Touya were on their way to the apartment and would explain further.

Shouta turned to Izuku, who was frowning in the direction they had just come from, he sighed, understanding their frustration, “don’t worry kid, we’ll make that bastard pay, for *everything* he’s done.”

Chapter End Notes

YAYYY
Aizawa finally got to punch Endeavour in the face. (if you don't

know what I'm talking about go reread Ch 41)
And of course we couldn't let him have *all* the fun so Yamada and Izuku also got some hits in >:3

Chapter 59: Testimony.

Chapter Summary

Touya steps onto the witness stand.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Touya paced around the living room of his apartment, staring at the ticking clock, watching the seconds go by at what seemed to be a snail's pace. He heard the bedroom door open and Fuyumi walked out, double checking her handbag for anything she could possibly have missed. She looked over at Touya.

"Touya, seriously!?" She exclaimed "you're wearing *that?*"

Touya looked down at his clothes, he thought it looked alright, sure it wasn't quite as nice as Fuyumi's blouse and skirt, but it certainly wasn't as, *rebellious* as his usual outfits, he'd even swapped out the boots for a pair of sneakers he'd borrowed from Natsuo. "What's wrong with this?"

"The jacket Tou, just this once, ditch the jacket," Fuyumi asked.

Touya grumbled a bit but obliged, he didn't see a reason Fuyumi had to be so fussy about this yeah it was weird, but it wasn't like they were going anywhere fancy. Then again, he knew how the news would latch onto anything they could possibly criticize. He tapped his arm as the time went by, ticking closer and closer to something he'd never thought would be possible. They were finally facing Endeavour; they were finally going to take him down. And today was also the day that Todoroki Touya would no longer be a dead man.

It was positively nerve wracking.

There were so many things that could go wrong. He was not worried that Endeavour would get away, no, they had Nedzu on their side and a hell of a lot of evidence collected over the last two months, the bastard had nowhere to run and nobody to hide behind. No, Touya was worried about the inevitable wave of public attention, the past few days of trial had already garnered attention, even if everything was happening behind closed doors until now. And after this was all over, every camera in Japan would be looking at his siblings, but he

had no doubt that *he* would be the one who'd end up in the public eye of the storm. Even if he was going to be hell bent on dodging the vultures, that wouldn't stop people from talking, the dead Todoroki child, alive and well, the news wasn't going to let a story *that* juicy slip away easily.

The clock tick, tick, ticked away incessantly.

Shoto was a nervous wreck, no matter what anyone said he still feared that Endeavour would get away scot-free. Currently he was hiding under Keigo's wings and trying not to start sobbing. If only the damn clock would go faster, they could get this over with.

"Are you guys *sure* you don't want me to go with you?" Keigo asked for what must have been the twentieth time since yesterday.

"We'll be fine Kei," Natsuo repeated, "Yamada and Kurose are perfectly capable of keeping us safe."

Keigo ruffled his feathers, accidentally causing Shoto to sneeze, "oops, sorry little buddy," Keigo smoothed his feathers back down. He sighed, "I'm not saying I doubt them, I'm saying you might need a quick getaway if things get dicey."

"Nope, sorry Birdie, but you're also kind of a hot topic right now, even if people don't recognize you, they're *going* to figure it out."

Keigo looked a bit miffed but kept his mouth shut, Touya appreciated the sentiment, but there wasn't exactly a lot he could do. Nobody was worried that a fight would break out, all they needed was to keep the reporters away.

Eventually the alarm on Touya's phone went off, alright, time to get out of here. The plan was to spend the least time standing around that they possibly could, to minimize any interaction with nosy reporters. The four of them took the bus to the courthouse, doing their best to conceal their identities, particularly Shoto, who had been given one of Izuku's hoodies and a pair of sunglasses to hide his hair and scar. In front of the courthouse was a mob of reporters, a surprisingly quiet mob. Touya looked around and spotted Pops' car parked around the side of the building, it looked like the heroes had already gone inside. They silently wondered how the hell they would get past the sea of cameras and microphones without being completely trapped.

Fuyumi nudged Touya, he looked up to see Kurose waving at them from the side door. The four of them quickly shuffled into the

building, being greeted by four people, only one of whom Touya didn't recognize. A jolly looking man was speaking with Nedzu, whose ears flicked as soon as the four of them walked in.

"Oh, there you children are!" Nedzu clapped his paws together, "Hirano and I were simply going over your case while we waited." He turned to the strange man, Hirano, who Touya now realised was probably a lawyer, "I trust they're in good hands with you?"

"I'll do my best, although I make no promises for what our opposition would try," Hirano flipped through some documents, among them Touya could spot print outs of various pictures that had been taken of Shoto's injuries. He then turned to the four of them, eyes lingering just a bit on Touya, of course, Hirano knew that Touya was alive, Nedzu would have told him as part of building the case, but it was probably a shock to see him in the flesh.

"You children understand why you're here, correct?"

Touya nodded, suddenly feeling far more nervous than he rightfully should, "we're here as witnesses."

"And you're prepared to answer whatever question gets asked of you?"

Touya looked at Fuyumi who spoke for him, "indeed we are."

Hirano nodded, satisfied, "good, now we need to get your story straight."

Touya looked over at Pops, who gave them all a thumbs up and a big grin. "Don't stress it too much little listeners, we've basically got this in the bag already, just think of your words as the final nail in the coffin."

Once they were ready, the four of them stayed with the three heroes, while Hirano simply told them to be ready when they were called for. Great, more waiting, Touya was a bit pissed that he couldn't go with his siblings to the stand, he knew there would be tears by the end of the day. While they waited, Touya ran off to the bathroom to wash the dye out of his hair, if people were going to see him, if people were going to believe him, he would be wholly a Todoroki, just for today.

Fuyumi was the first one called, the steady tick of the clock marking the minutes. Shoto kept staring at the door, not even looking at anyone who tried to pull his attention away. Natsuo, who was trying

to do *anything* but think about what was about to happen, had struck up a conversation with Kurose. Touya leaned against his pops, grateful for his steady confidence that everything was going to be alright.

Fuyumi returned as Natsuo was called out, she was surprisingly composed, not even a tear on her face, although plenty were welling up in her eyes, but then she slumped into one of the seats and put on her headphones. Touya suspected that nobody would be able to get her out of her own head until this whole thing was over, although Kurose certainly tried, pulling Fuyumi into a side hug and whispering something to her.

When Natsuo returned he was gritting his teeth and red in the face, when Pops asked him what happened he just muttered something about stupid questions. Touya sighed as he waited for Shoto to be called, because of course, Touya himself was probably the last witness they'd call, their ace in the hole.

And just as predicted, a few minutes later, Shoto was called, Natsuo ruffled his hair before he left, promising that they'd probably go easy on him since he was a kid.

When Shoto came back he had a spark of determination in his watery eyes, he smiled at Touya, "father is positively seething out there, you would laugh if you saw his face."

Touya chuckled, "I'm sure he is, the old man has known he's screwed since the trial began."

And finally, Touya was called to the stand. He stood frozen for a moment, before taking a deep breath and following the officer into the courtroom. The moment he stepped inside he heard the whispers, he could imagine the wide eyes and gaping mouths of the people in the gallery. He fought the urge to pull at his shirt, to try to cover the scars on his neck and face, to look at the floor just so he didn't have to face the masses. Instead, he kept his head up, staring unwaveringly at Endeavour, Shoto was right, he looked *pissed*, Touya found it hard to keep a straight face instead of laughing at the old man's misery.

He stepped up to the stand, glancing over to where Hirano was standing, but ultimately keeping his gaze locked on Endeavour.

The only people who appeared unfazed were the lawyers and the judges, they'd probably been told ahead of time. Hirano began speaking, "witness, please state your name, age, and relation to the defendant."

Alright, he could do this, just three easy questions, “my name is Todoroki Touya, I’m twenty years old, and I’m the old man’s son.” He resisted the urge to add a few jabs at Endeavour’s character in there, Hirano had said that might hurt their case more than help it.

“What was your childhood like?”

Fuck, there were so many things that he wanted to say, that he wanted to *scream* to the world, but he had to remain calm. “In short? Horrible. Me, Yumi, and Natsu were all basically fending for ourselves while trying not to piss off *dear old dad*. Mum wasn’t all that present either, not that I blame her considering the shit she had to deal with.” Touya sighed, “you know, I don’t know if Yumi would have told you, the two of us taught ourselves first aid because me and Natsu kept getting into trouble, and we couldn’t go to our parents for help. We learned to cook on our own because sometimes mum would be too busy being yelled at to cook food.”

“And your youngest brother?”

“Oh we weren’t allowed to interact with Shoto in any way, after all, we could possibly ‘taint him with our imperfectness’, or other excuses like that,” Touya scoffed, “we weren’t even allowed to help him when he got hurt.”

A few other questions were thrown his way, basically asking him to tell the entire story of his life up until he was fourteen, he was glad Hirano didn’t ask him about after the fire, it wouldn’t be all that useful to their case anyways.

And then Endeavour’s lawyer started talking, and *oh boy*, Touya wanted to fry this bastard’s face off. The questions he asked were almost asinine, apparently just barely reasonable, but *still*, bringing up Touya’s former admiration for Endeavour was just a low blow. And then, he asked the one question Touya had been dreading.

“So, because of all this, you chose to fake your death and run away from home? Why not contact the authorities?” That condescending tone was already enough to set Touya’s nerves on edge, but *this*? No, this was just inane, stupid, an obvious leading question. But fine, if he wanted the answer to *that* question, he’d get it.

“First off, I couldn’t contact the authorities because my ‘father’ could have any investigation shut down in minutes! Secondly.” Touya took a deep breath. “*Ran away? Faked my death?* Do, you, think, a goddamn *fourteen-year-old*, would willingly put themself through that? Do you

fucking think that if I planned any of that I would have these burn scars? It was an accident, one that I still don't know how the hell I survived. But I can tell you one thing I *know* didn't happen. I sure as hell didn't survive because of that bastard" he jabbed a finger at Endeavour "in fact he didn't even come looking for me! I know he didn't, let me ask you, do any of you remember how long it him to stop pretending to grieve? *Two weeks*. Does that sound like a caring father to any of you? Does that sound like a man who would go looking for a son that *begged* him just to spend an hour together? *Does it!?*" Touya felt blood run down his face, oh, this again, he wiped at his face, trying not to get blood on the witness stand, "because I *dare* any of you to look me and my siblings in the eyes and say that it does."

He glared daggers at Endeavour, refusing to show just how rattled he was as he felt himself being escorted off the witness stand. He stepped back into the room with his siblings. He vaguely registered some words that sounded concerned, probably directed at him. He moved forward half in a blurry daze, practically collapsing onto the first person his brain latched onto, his pops, clinging onto him like a lifeline. He heard some muttered words that sounded too far away, and a hand carding through hair that he knew was his, even if it didn't feel like it, pulling him back from whatever corner of his mind he'd dug himself into. Finally, he managed to blink his eyes, sound, sight, and touch returning to normal.

"There you are little listener," Pops whispered softly, "you had us worried for a second."

"I'm fine, mostly," Touya sighed, "*fuck*, I lost my cool a bit back there, I, they brought up *the fire*."

Kurose frowned beside him, "asses," they muttered.

Touya hung his head "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have reacted like that."

Pops smiled, "you did your best kiddo."

Touya chuckled "you don't even know what I said!"

Pops shrugged, "and? I don't need to know exactly what happened to know that you did your best."

Touya couldn't help but smile, "thanks pops." He got his hair ruffled in response.

Nedzu cleared his throat and looked over each one of them individually, “whatever you did, it will be enough, you’ve done your part, leave the rest to me and this trial shall be over by tomorrow.” And Touya had no doubt that he’d keep that promise.

Chapter End Notes

Bye bye ya flaming bitch.

Chapter 60: A mother's love.

Chapter Summary

The siblings get a visitor.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

They had all waited with bated breath for the verdict, for the trial to come to a close. But Touya had other things to worry about as well, the whole of Japan had gone wild with his apparent resurrection, not to mention his, *breakdown*, on the stand had gotten quite the reaction. Mostly sympathy, thank goodness, and it had just thrown fuel to the flames of the public's rage at Endeavour, the fire that had been brewing since the first day of the trial.

But the last day of trial had ended in victory last week, and Touya had watched joyously as Endeavour was taken away in handcuffs, or, perhaps he should call him Enji, now that his hero licence had been permanently stripped from him. Oh how he relished the way the old man's face contorted between fury and anguish, the angry shouting as he tried futilely to argue against the verdict. Touya didn't care much for what happened to Enji after this, for all he cared the bastard could rot in a hell of his own actions, all that mattered now was that he'd never hurt Touya and his siblings again. There were only a few loose ends left to tie up, most of which would be sorted by Nedzu and whatever scraps of the commission hadn't been forced to entirely restaff and restructure. But there was one thing that had to be settled personally, and this time, Touya was dreading it for an entirely different reason. His siblings, on the other hand, seemed absolutely delighted, even Shoto, who had been so nervous, had been talked onto being somewhat excited. It had gotten to the point that even Keigo, normally the most dramatic person in every room he was in, seemed overwhelmed at the sheer amount buzzing energy that permeated the apartment.

Touya and the others had been organizing the apartment a bit, as it had fallen into disarray while they were all panicking about the trial, he'd just finished organizing the clutter that had been strewn about the living room; a few more chores and the apartment would be spotless. He heard a ruckus being caused in the kitchen, he sighed, *damn it.* He peeked in to see Keigo and Fuyumi bickering about where

to put the dishes, well, Keigo was more or less getting frustrated with Fuyumi's odd protectiveness over the kitchen and all that was kept in it. Touya cleared his throat, gesturing for Keigo to hand him the dishes, Keigo obliged quickly, handing over the plate he was holding to Touya, before going off to help Natsuo with the sweeping and dusting. As he started putting things away, he glanced over to Fuyumi as she scrubbed a bowl, her arms covered in suds, she seemed relieved about having someone who actually knew her particular methods helping out.

Once the whole apartment was dusted, organized, and thoroughly mopped, they all congregated in the living room, or, at least Touya and his siblings did, Keigo had left a few minutes ago, claiming to have something to do. Touya was a bit miffed, he'd wanted Keigo to stick around, at least long enough to say hello, but he was assured that Keigo wouldn't be gone for too long and would *absolutely* make it back in time to introduce himself. That just left four people who had yet to show up, Touya's family, and Kurose, who had quickly become his siblings' parental figures. He hoped they got here before their guest arrived. Touya now had nothing to do but sit around, unconsciously tapping his arm as he paced back and forth.

There was a knock on the door followed by voices, one just slightly louder than the others. Touya grinned, finally! He opened the door, catching Izuku as they tried to tackle him.

"Touya!" Izuku squealed in delight. "Are you excited?"

"Yeah." Touya replied, failing to entirely match their enthusiasm, they tightened their grip on him, a silent reassurance.

Kurose was greeted with several hugs from Touya's siblings, "hello kids!" They seemed to have been thrown off balance by the sheer force of three people suddenly clinging to them, but it certainly didn't show on their expression. They were quickly ushered into the living room and bombarded with conversation.

Touya turned to his parents, both of whom seemed a bit hesitant, Pops was the first one to speak, concern showing clearly on his face, "hey kiddo, how are you holding up?"

"As well as I can, I guess."

Pops hummed, staring at him for a second, "nervous and excited and kind of worried you'll disappoint her?" He asked.

Touya sighed after a moment of half-stunned silence, he really needed to get used to being read like a book, “well, yeah, who wouldn’t be?”

Dad shook his head “you’ll do fine Touya, I’m just surprised you wanted *us* here.”

“Why not? Kurose was gonna be here anyways,” Touya pointed out.

“Well she asked for Anan specifically, we haven’t even met her,” Dad paused, “besides, I thought you’d want to talk to your mother alone, it’s been years after all.”

“Exactly!” Touya put his head in his hands, “it’s been years! What if I fuck up and say something I shouldn’t? Or what if-”

He was stopped by a hand in his hair, cutting off his panic before it even began, he turned a half-hearted glare to his dad. “I’m dead serious you know.”

“I know, I also know that you’re overthinking this,” Dad said in that particular variation of his permanently bored tone he used whenever he needed to knock some sense into someone. “If she’s the way you remember, then she’s not going to care.”

Touya took a breath, his dad was right, besides, Kurose had already told them that Mum was happy to see them again, *all* of them. “Yeah, okay.”

Dad smiled, “though you still haven’t answered my first question, why are *we* here?” He asked, hesitantly stepping into the apartment.

Touya smiled back, “why wouldn’t you be? You’re my family, it wouldn’t feel right without you, at least to me.”

He ducked away as Pops ruffled his hair with a chuckle. “Oi! Don’t mess it up completely! Do you know how hard it is to make something like this,” Touya gestured to his spiky hair, “*not* look like I just fell into a bush?”

Pops sighed, glancing over at his husband and kid, “oh I know, I know all too well, although it’s usually a dumpster in Shou’s case.” That earned him some grumbling.

He glanced back at Touya, “still, I don’t think your mother’s gonna care all that much, she’ll be happy to have her kid back, messy dyed hair notwithstanding,” he paused, looking closely at Touya’s hair, “am

I going insane or is that a different shade of black?"

Touya chuckled, "no, you're not insane, I ran out and just grabbed the first one I saw." That was only partially true, yes, he *had* run out of hair dye, and yes, his hair *was* now a more raven black rather than the charcoal colour he'd been using previously, but if that colour just so happened to match his dad's hair? Well, that was between him and Kayama.

It didn't take much longer before finally, there was another knock on the door, and Fuyumi practically bolted out of the kitchen to answer it. Shoto and Natsuo were right behind her, although they seemed to be a bit more hesitant, and Touya may or may not have hidden behind his pops. There were some hushed voices, and Fuyumi was greeted with a hug from their mum. Touya stared, trying desperately to see what had changed and what hadn't in the six years since he'd last seen her, trying to see if she was still the same mother he remembered. And her smile was strained, her eyes were sadder, her hair was longer, and her crow's feet were deeper. But that was his mum, his quiet, scared, and caring mum.

Her mental state had been improving rapidly, now that the doctors knew the true reason for her break, and after several processes of approval, she'd been allowed this visit, although with supervision. Touya glanced briefly at the golden woman standing just in front of the door, silently observing, she wouldn't interrupt.

Touya watched as Mum fussed over his siblings, quietly grateful for the time to collect himself, she also spoke with Kurose a bit, of course, Kurose had been visiting her occasionally. And then his mum's eyes landed on him, and she went quiet, staring, perhaps for the same reason he did, to see if he was still her son. How was he supposed to say that she was wrong? That he'd changed too much to be her baby boy, that Touya as she knew him had been dead far too long to be revived.

His dad nudged him forward, a quiet encouragement. And Touya stood quietly before being embraced in a tight hug, he froze, unsure how to even react.

"Touya, it's really you." His mum's eyes welled with tears.

Touya stood awkwardly, "yeah, it's me," in a way.

"You've grown so much, I hardly recognized you," she stared at him, eyes taking in every detail she could.

Touya chuckled a bit “I don’t think I grew that much, a couple inches maybe?”

Mum shook her head “well, some things haven’t changed I see.” She hugged him tighter, “I missed you so much my son.”

Touya finally managed to hug her back, “I missed you too mum.”

Suddenly, her eyes focused behind where Touya was standing, “oh, Touya, do you want to introduce me?” She asked pointedly, Touya realised who she was looking at and smiled.

He stepped back, “mum, meet,” why was he so nervous about this? He’s the one who wanted this to happen. He took a breath “meet my family, well, my adoptive family I guess.”

Mum eyed each of them, not unkindly, but analytically nonetheless, “so you are the heroes that helped my son?”

Pops was the one to step forward, but Touya gave him a look that just said ‘let me do this’ and he nodded. Touya turned back to his mum, “yeah, these are my fathers, Yamada Hizashi and Aizawa Shouta,” they both nodded politely, “and my little sibling, Izuku.” Izuku gave her a wave.

“It’s nice to meet all of you, you may call me Himura Rei.” Touya’s eyes widened, then he smiled, it wasn’t surprising that she’d go back to her maiden name.

There was so much catching up to do, they talked for almost three hours, it was mostly Mum asking questions about how their lives had been, what she’d missed, and sharing childhood stories with everyone which made all four siblings a bit embarrassed. Touya had to repeat the story of how he ended up with this insane bunch a few times, with plenty of interjections and slight corrections from the others, despite the half-hearted glares he kept throwing their way. Fuyumi spoke about how she was doing in college, and how she was planning to work in education while Natsuo excitedly talked about all the friends he’d made and how his last year of high school was going. Shoto didn’t have much to say about himself, but he ended up singing Izuku and Tenya’s praises as he recounted how the two of them showed him that power wasn’t everything when it came to being a good hero, and he even showed a few tricks he’d learned with his fire.

Fuyumi had begun talking about the past month and a half *very* carefully, making sure to omit the details of their involvement with

the commission case, when, with uncanny timing, Keigo flew in through the window. Touya eyed him, wondering if he could figure out where the hell Keigo had gone.

“I told you guys I’d make it back in time!” He huffed, clearly having gone at near top speed to get here, he cleared his throat and fixed his hair, “hi, I’m Takami Keigo, nice to meet you.”

Touya chuckled, “hey Birdie! We were just talking about you.”

Mum smiled “ah, so *this* is your friend? He seems like a nice young man.”

Keigo grinned, “aww, Ashes, you introduced me as your friend?”

“Shut up dipshit,” Touya playfully shoved him onto the couch. He sighed, “and this idiot is staying with me since he has nowhere else.”

His mum smiled at seeing the two of them bicker lightly, “I’m so proud of all of you, even through everything that happened with your father, and even though I couldn’t be there for you, you’ve been so brave.”

All four siblings went quiet, soaking up the praise, then Fuyumi spoke, “speaking of, when you’re released from the hospital, are you going to come back to the estate?” Of course with the old man now in jail, the manor and estate had been given over to the four of them, and while Touya had decided against living there again, Fuyumi, Natsuo, and Shoto had gladly taken it and would be moving back next week.

Mum shook her head, “oh, I don’t think I could, too many memories, I still have my family’s old home in the countryside, I think I’ll go there, I can see you have people who can take care of you, you don’t need me around anymore.”

“But you’ll visit us, right mother? And we can visit you?” Shoto asked.

“Of course, I’m always here for you,” she hugged each of them.

“I think it’s about time I get going,” Mum said, getting up from the couch, “it was lovely seeing you again, and meeting your new family.”

She then turned to the other adults, “you three, thank you for being there for my children, you have my eternal gratitude.”

Kurose smiled, “it’s no problem Rei, they’re part of our family, we’ll

always protect them.”

Mum then looked at Touya and his siblings, who were in various states of sadness and joy, “take care my children, you’ve already grown into such strong and kind people, I know you’ll be alright.”

Chapter End Notes

> Hey, sorry I'm a bit late, there was a power outage and I couldn't access the internet for a few hours.

Chapter 61: Still Friends.

Chapter Summary

Izuku and Tenya make sure that Shoto still gets to socialize.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

Signed and Spoken Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku sighed as they tried to comb their hair into something presentable, this wasn't going to be pretty, or easy. They checked the time, one hour, they had one hour to stop panicking and form a plan, well, more of a plan than 'somehow get five people past a large crowd', they'd probably be *more* nervous if this was their first time doing something a bit stupid. And at least this time they weren't going to get killed if they were caught. They heard a meow as Shadow slow blinked at them from the corner of their shelf, they slow blinked back, smiling, "yeah, you're right, I'm overthinking this way too much." Shadow just meowed again, jumping down to rub her face against their leg, "or maybe you're just hungry, huh?" Izuku sighed, petting her as demanded, "you're lucky, cats don't have social scandals, well, not that I know of."

The brush caught in their hair and they squeaked as it pulled at their scalp when they tried to get it out, *not again*. They looked over to where their parents were doing some paperwork, well, Papa was doing paperwork, Dad was grumbling over a case he and Uncle Sekijiro had been assigned. They walked up to their papa and tapped him on the shoulder, he turned and quickly held back a laugh at their predicament, covering his mouth even though that did little to muffle the giggles that made their way past his lips, they glared at him until he managed to get the hairbrush unstuck.

"Geez little listener, I thought I told you to get ready earlier?" Papa asked, taking in the state of their hair.

Izuku huffed, handing over the brush, "yeah, but," they trailed off, unable to think of a good excuse that didn't involve spilling their plans.

Papa deftly combed out their hair, somehow not snagging on any tangles, at least not in any way that hurt. Izuku was determined to figure out the secret, that way they wouldn't have to bother Papa every time they wanted to make their hair look nice. It took a few minutes to get through their unruly curls, and they weren't exactly making things easier by fidgeting around instead of sitting still, they were just so *bored*. But it gave them some time to think, and their brain ran a mile a minute to puzzle everything together before they left, after all, there was no telling if they'd all even go along with the idea, Izuku was just relying on their friendship with Shoto.

They heard a knock on the door, and practically sprinted to open it, much to their parents' amusement. They politely greeted Tenya, who was dressed in his usual formal attire, "Izuku, are you ready to go?"

Izuku nodded rapidly "yep!"

Papa looked around "where's Tensei? Isn't he supposed to be with you?" He asked curiously.

Tenya froze for a moment and Izuku glared at him out of sight from Papa, **"oh, uh, my brother is waiting in the car outside, I thought it would be unnecessary for both of us to be here just to pick up Izuku."** Izuku nearly wanted to facepalm, how on earth does Tenya make even a half-truth sound completely false, and they could see Papa's eyes narrow behind his glasses, he glanced at Izuku for a moment before sighing.

"Don't get yourselves hurt," was all he said, but Izuku knew they'd be hearing more about this when they got back home. They nodded and shoved Tenya out of the door and into the hall, shutting the door behind them.

"So, what's the plan?" Tenya asked as soon as they were out of earshot.

Izuku glared at him, "what have I told you about lying to people?"

Tenya looked sheepish, "I should let you handle it. Sorry, I panicked."

Izuku huffed, "right, well there's not much we can do about that now." They went quiet for a moment, "I think we're just going to have to figure it out when we get there." Tenya frowned clearly not satisfied with the answer, but knowing that if there was a better one, Izuku would have found it by now.

“At least we know we can convince them-”

Izuku turned, nearly bumping into Tenya, “we don’t know that actually,” and when Tenya tried to rebuke them, they shook their head, “they might be your friends, but we both know how they can be, especially Yaoyorozu.”

Tenya tried to find something to say, but eventually just huffed and kept walking, admitting defeat.

The two of them were rather quiet on the car ride, there was nothing to say, both of them were buzzing with so much anxiety and excitement that Izuku was sure they’d let something slip the second they opened their mouth. But eventually they pulled up to the gathering, with even more crowds of reporters than usual, all clamouring to hear from the heroes in attendance, Izuku had no doubt in their mind what questions were being asked.

It did make it exponentially more difficult to get anywhere without being spotted, but Izuku made it work, mostly by waiting until their poor Uncle Tensei got surrounded by reporters, unknowingly providing the perfect distraction for their stealth. And it helped that none of the heroes paid much attention to a random kid today, likely too busy, or catching glimpses of them and, like always, assuming they were a legacy kid.

They made their way to a corner table where they did their usual routine of ducking under the tablecloth and waiting for Tenya to find his friends. It also happened to be a wonderful spot to hear all the gossip of people passing by, unaware of the eavesdropper listening in on their comments. And all Izuku could hear was people talking about the Todorokis, some of it was people just wondering how anyone was going to handle the pressure every active hero was being put under to be even more flawless than the press already demanded. But there were even more talking about how they ‘always had a suspicion’ that something was wrong with the Todorokis, like people always did after scandals, some even mentioning other heroes who didn’t exactly have the best reputations. And the reporters were no better, Izuku had seen some articles digging up years old incidents to scrutinize whatever hero they’d set their sights on. The heroes of UA had gotten the worst of it, having been directly involved, but that didn’t stop the frenzy from bleeding out to everyone else.

There was a great ruckus coming from the entrance all of a sudden, and despite Izuku’s curiosity, they stayed put, unwilling to risk their

privacy for something they'd likely find out about later. But among the noise, they barely made out Tenya's footsteps, accompanied by three others, and silence where a fifth set should be. They poked their head out only to be instantly tackled underneath the table, getting a face full of hair and a slight shock as Kaminari's quirk activated in tandem with his excitement. They giggled and shoved him off of them before half-dragging him out to say hello to the other two.

But they didn't seem to be getting a chance as Monoma got up in their face, a sparkle in his eyes as he asked "so, what are we doing?"

Izuku was momentarily confused before once again glaring at Tenya who shrugged, "*this* time it was on purpose, okay?" Then he muttered "I didn't want to lie to my friends," and Izuku once again felt like smacking Tenya on the head for being so damn honest that it was putting their plans in jeopardy. Sure, *he* trusted his friends not to tell anyone, and Izuku didn't think they'd do anything malicious, but that was still three more people who could slip up, even if it was only the bare minimum information.

They sighed, "we're sneaking out." This elicited gasps, one of delight from Kaminari, and one of utter horror from Yaoyorozu.

"Right now?" Monoma asked, grinning.

"You shouldn't be encouraging this," Yaoyorozu scolded him.

Tenya cleared his throat, "maybe I should explain, we're sneaking out because Shoto wanted to talk to you three, and, well," he trailed off, but Izuku could see that everyone knew what he wasn't saying. That Shoto hadn't been able to come to the gathering, now that his father was no longer a hero, and even if he could, Izuku doubted that he'd want to, not with all the vultures circling about the place.

Kaminari tilted his head, "*Shoto?* When did you get that close with Todoroki?" He muttered.

"And more to the point," Monoma interrupted, "*how* are we sneaking out of here?"

"Why are any of you agreeing to this? Our parents would be disappointed!" Yaoyorozu crossed her arms, stubbornly.

Monoma glared at her, "and Todoroki's our friend, don't you want to see him?"

“Plus,” Kaminari chimed in, “with everything that’s going on, we really should talk to him, stick in his corner, you know?”

Yaoyorozu looked incredibly uncomfortable with the idea, but looking around, she must have seen that she was the only person who was concerned. She sighed, turning to Tenya, “is this really a good idea?” She tried, quietly pleading for him to agree with her.

“It’s the only way we could think of to get all of you in the same place,” Tenya pointed out, “otherwise we’d be walking for hours to get to your houses.”

Yaoyorozu sighed, “I suppose you have a point, very well, if we’re going, we should go now.” She looked over her shoulder, “the side entrance is our best bet.”

Izuku raised an eyebrow, quietly impressed by her quick thinking, “because of the commotion at the front?”

Yaoyorozu nodded, “Best Jeanist just arrived, the reporters will be distracted.” Ah, that made sense, Best Jeanist, the new number two hero, Izuku pitied the man, it wasn’t going to be easy, stepping into that role with all of Japan watching his every step to see if he even slightly stumbled.

Izuku nodded, taking the lead as the five of them attempted to sneak around, once they were stopped by a curious hero, but surprisingly, Monoma of all people managed to talk them out of trouble. Besides, it wasn’t really the other heroes that they had to worry about, those were people who knew to mind their own business when it came to legacy kids, it was just the press, who they easily avoided with all the distractions. The only time they stopped, was for Tenya to tell his brother where they were going now that it was too late to stop them, Uncle Tensei had just looked tired and said that they had to be back in an hour or he’d come looking for them. They weren’t even going that far, just to an alleyway across the street from the venue, if it was any further, or if they didn’t have a vigilante in the group, Izuku knew they wouldn’t be getting away with this escapade.

Izuku was rather amused with how Monoma and Yaoyorozu seemed to be trying to avoid touching literally anything in the alleyway, there wasn’t even a dumpster or trash anywhere, and still they seemed to treat every surface as if it was infected with something. Meanwhile Kaminari had zero issues with picking up every littered bottle cap and interesting rock he could find. Of course all that was forgotten the

moment they saw Shoto standing in the corner, talking with Keigo who was perched on the fire escape just above him.

“Todoroki!” Kaminari exclaimed, “how have you been dude? And who’s the red angel over there?”

Izuku put a hand over their mouth to muffle their giggles, and they could see Keigo looked equally stunned, however Shoto had no issue with laughing at that description, “that ‘angel’ is Keigo, he’s my brother’s friend and he agreed to keep an eye on us.”

Monoma’s eyes sparkled, “when you say brother, you mean?”

Shoto nodded, “Touya, yeah.”

“Speaking of him, isn’t the test today?” Izuku looked over at Keigo.

“Yep!” Keigo looked positively delighted, “and before you ask, no, that doesn’t mean I’m telling you anything” he grinned mischievously. Izuku pouted, the two of them had been super secretive over something, Touya said he’d tell as soon as he got his license, but really, couldn’t he just tell Izuku?

Shoto huffed, “yes alright, now shoo,” he waved his hands at Keigo, “let us talk in peace.”

Keigo laughed, “fine, fine,” he flew up, disappearing over the rooftop where Izuku had no doubt he was going to be perched until they were done.

Yaoyorozu was the first one to break the short silence that followed, “are you, *alright?*” She asked hesitantly.

Shoto smiled, “better than alright actually.”

Monoma laughed, “well, at least you’re in good spirits about this mess, although I can’t say smiles don’t look weird on you.”

Shoto shrugged, “I’m just surprised you all showed up.”

Kaminari looked offended, “why wouldn’t we!? You’re our friend! I mean yeah you used to be kind of a jerk, but you got nicer!” Izuku thought that ‘kind of’ was a severe understatement, but maybe he was trying to be nice about it.

Shoto ended up having to recount nearly everything that happened, omitting certain parts where things might connect back to Izuku’s,

unusual, involvement. Which they very much appreciated, they didn't exactly love the idea of telling anyone, especially Yaoyorozu and Kaminari, neither of whom would be able to keep their mouths shut about it, for one reason or another. Still, it was nice to see the four of them get along, and even Yaoyorozu eventually loosened up a little, getting very invested in what Shoto was saying.

After he finished talking, Monoma just seemed to have more questions, but one look from Yaoyorozu and he held his tongue. Of course, that silence barely lasted with Kaminari around, and they ended up talking about a recent villain attack for twenty minutes, and even Izuku couldn't figure out how the heck they ended up here.

"I'm telling you guys," Kaminari waved his arms around, having been attempting to act out the battle as he told it, "it was totally awesome, you should have seen my sister! She shocked the guy so much that she stunned him! And then wham! One hit and he was out cold!"

Izuku tilted their head, "wasn't there another villain there?" They asked, because they knew for a fact that the villains in question had been working as a duo.

Kaminari nodded, "uh, yeah there was, but, I didn't really pay attention to that part," he looked sheepish at the admission, "wait, did *you* see that fight?" He asked.

Izuku shook their head, "no, I heard about it same as you, my papa was there and told me about it." Tenya gave them a sideways glance, confused as to why they were even saying this, but they really didn't mind telling these three a *few* things.

Yaoyorozu frowned, "I hope your father is alright, it's dangerous for civilians to be so close to fights."

Izuku just started giggling, and Monoma and Yaoyorozu looked rather worried, like that shouldn't be funny, and Izuku supposed that from their perspective it really wasn't. Shoto sighed, probably tired of their bullshit, "was Yamada helping the evacuation or the fight?" He asked, somewhat curiously but also giving them a look that said 'please stop confusing my friends.'

"The fight."

"Huh?" Kaminari sounded confused.

Tenya looked at Izuku, and upon seeing that they weren't going to

elaborate, decided that they'd had enough fun, "really Izuku?" He sighed, "so, remember when Izuku said they weren't *technically* a legacy?"

The other three nodded, and Monoma spoke up with, "right, because they'd been adopted by your uncles, and not part of the main Iida family?"

Izuku couldn't help themself and started giggling again, "when did we ever say I was in the Iida family to begin with?" They asked innocently.

Monoma frowned, "you're Iida's cousin-"

"Technically, no, but yes," Tenya interrupted, "they're my brother's friends' kid, I just call them my cousin because I call my brother's friends my uncles."

"But then, how would you be even adjacent to a legacy unless," Izuku could almost see the gears turning in Yaoyorozu's head, "your parents are heroes aren't they?"

Izuku just burst out laughing at that point, much to Tenya and Shoto's exasperation. Shoto covered their mouth with his hand as he spoke, "their parents are Present Mic and," he paused as Izuku glared at him, "an underground hero," he said, remembering that it probably wasn't a good idea to mention their dad by name.

Kaminari's eyes widened, "holy shit, *Present Mic*, are you serious!? That's awesome, he's so cool!" Kaminari began rambling about how amazing it must be to have someone like that as a parent, and Izuku had to answer several questions, but they managed to answer most of them. There was a question about their dad, but that was shut down by Monoma, who reminded the others that underground heroes liked to keep their identities and connections quiet, and that the only reason they knew his mother was because she wasn't as active in the field.

About ten minutes later, Izuku heard a soft whistle, and stepped to the side, dragging Tenya with them, leaving space for Keigo to land, "I believe you kids should be getting back to the party?" He reminded them. Oh, had it been an hour already?

Shoto looked a bit sad at having to leave, but had no choice and said his goodbyes as Keigo picked him up and flew off. And the five of them wandered back into the gathering, sneaking back to their table and spending the rest of the evening goofing around, well, Izuku and

Kaminari were goofing around, the other three just seemed exasperated at their antics, but Izuku didn’t mind that. It was nice to know that these three would be sticking by Shoto, he deserved good friends like them.

Chapter End Notes

I figured we needed some fluff and fun before we get into next chapter's action.

Chapter 62: The Phoenix Rises.

Chapter Summary

Touya and Keigo's first mission.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Today was the day, Touya stared in the mirror, his signature jacket hung over a frame that was now lean with muscle rather than starved thin, patches of skin that should have been practically falling off of him were now much more normal burn scars. A year ago he'd never have recognized the man standing in front of him as himself, hell, even *now* he sometimes didn't recognize himself, but at least now when he looked at his reflection, he didn't see years of anger boiling away under a façade of humanity. His phone chimed, a text message from Keigo, right, he better get ready if he didn't want to make them late, and being late on your first day was never a good idea. He pulled on his boots and grabbed a few things before rushing up to the roof.

When he got there it seemed that Keigo was still a little while away, Touya smiled, the dumbass had gotten so nervous that he'd been ready an hour early and then decided to fly around the city until it was time to go. He sighed, he couldn't say he blamed Keigo for being an anxious mess, he wasn't much better himself, neither of them wanted to mess anything up today. Touya reached into his pocket, fishing out the little plastic rectangle that was the cause of an entire two weeks of stress. He still couldn't believe it, staring at the tiny photo of him in the corner, next to his name, age, a few other details and, much more importantly, *his hero name.* It had been positively nerve wracking waiting to find out if he'd succeeded, if he'd passed the test, which was every bit as brutally difficult as he was expecting, in fact, up until a few days ago, he had been convinced that he couldn't have passed. And then he got the call and, after plenty of freaking out, he went and got his hero license, the little stamp in the corner marking as a provisional license. Still, temporary as it may be, the simple plastic seemed to shine in his hands as if it was made of the most precious metal in the world.

He glanced briefly at the two other things he was carrying, his gloves,

and a hard mask with filters which would cover his nose and mouth. These were most likely the only things that would even convey his outfit as a hero costume, after all, a jacket, shirt, jeans and boots weren't exactly unusual. Still, appearances were only that, he would be a fool if he wasn't wearing *some* light armour underneath it all, especially since that armour doubled as a thermoregulator just like his gloves.

The sound of wings flapping made him whirl around to face Keigo as he landed on the roof, and Touya couldn't help but stare at his friend's outfit, it was the first time he'd seen it in full. Keigo had completely ditched the costume the commission had given him, both for personal reasons, and because it was simply not the most effective for his skillset. His current costume was a lot less cumbersome, for one, the jacket was just gone, and the flight suit had been replaced by a black sleeveless turtleneck for the least restriction on his movement. And his baggy pants were now strapped down at the bottom of the legs so that he didn't have any loose fabric flapping about as he flew. He was also wearing a pair of short fingerless gloves and had wrappings around his feet that didn't cover up his talons, which had regrown into razor sharp hooks. In fact, the only thing that was somewhat similar to his old costume was the yellow tinted visor protecting his eyes.

"Ashes! You're finally ready!" Keigo grinned, talons clacking on the concrete as he paced about, too excited to stand still.

Touya huffed, "yeah yeah, let's go." He pulled on his gloves and hung the mask around his neck, he wouldn't need it yet.

"Wait!" Keigo hopped up to Touya, holding out his hand, "you're forgetting something!" He giggled.

Touya looked at the object in Keigo's hand, oh, that's right, Touya smiled, the little 'project' Keigo had been working on. A small silver coloured earing stud with a thin chain, and on the end of the chain was a small red feather no bigger than his thumb. Touya hooked it into his ear, and the feather fluttered a bit, not pulling on his ear thanks to the leeway given by the chain, it wasn't just pretty, although it very much was, it also let them locate each other in emergencies and served as a one-way communicator.

"Thanks Birdie, or should I just call you Hawks since we're in costume?" Touya asked, partially just to mess with him.

"I don't think it matters as long as it's not our actual names, but I

think I'll stick with Ashes," Keigo held back laughter and Touya had to roll his eyes.

"Oh not this again, it's a fine name! You're just being a dick," Touya grumbled.

"It's also the name most people know you by dumbass!" Keigo chortled, "and really, Dabi is such an edgy name."

"Oh fuck off."

"It *is*."

Touya turned and glared at Keigo, "shouldn't we be going right now?" Keigo huffed in a tone that meant that Touya hadn't heard the last of this particular topic, but acquiesced, tossing Touya a few medical supplies to put in his utility belt before they headed off. He picked Touya up and lifted off the ground slowly, because no matter how much they practiced Touya still refused to risk being dropped. Then he flew off at a speed that Touya would call a bit too fast and Keigo would call a bit too slow.

They landed at what looked to be a simple forest on the side of a small mountain, thick trees with a few hiking trails now covered in fallen branches and muddy ground from yesterday's storm. Touya quietly assessed the damage, no wonder they were here. Meanwhile Keigo went searching for the person they were supposed to meet. They didn't have to walk far, just a few metres away they spotted Kurose, in full costume, talking to a paramedic. Keigo let out a whistle and they turned, quickly waving them over.

The two of them jogged up to where Kurose was standing, ignoring the weird look from the medic, Touya resisted the urge to ask what the hell her problem was. Before Keigo could even open his mouth Kurose cut him off, perhaps sensing that letting him talk would be a bad idea.

"There you two are, give me a second and I'll give you the briefing." Kurose turned to paramedic, "they're the other heroes on this mission, I trust you'll let them help?" After a bit of grumbling she nodded, muttering something about rookies getting in the way. Once again, Touya held back a snappy retort, he had to admit her concern wasn't exactly *unwarranted*, but the two of them understood the gravity of their duty.

Kurose took the tacit approval as their que to usher Touya and Keigo

just far enough away that they couldn't start an argument. "You two know the situation, yeah?" They asked, mostly rhetorically since they'd already called about it last night. Touya nodded, some young teenagers had gone missing and with the storm knocking down a bunch of trees and making the ground itself a major slipping hazard, the searchers had considered that this might be serious trouble, and Kurose was called in to help. Kurose had then brought in Touya and Keigo, as they thought that the two of them would be well suited for the job.

"Alright then," Thirteen turned to them, now fully focused on the mission, "Hawks, you're on scouting duty, find us a safe path through, Dabi, stick with me, the kids were reportedly headed to a waterfall near the middle of the mountain, let's start from there, but stay alert, you never know where we'll find them," Thirteen instructed, handing them both an earpiece.

Keigo nodded and flew ahead, calling in on the comms if he saw a hazard in their way, and the other two followed, occasionally calling out into the woods to see if they'd get a response. They quickly reached the waterfall, which was raging wildly as the water that had rained into the rivers nearly overflowed into the surrounding land. Touya eyed the rapids that had formed, he hoped nobody had fallen into *that* current, he doubted they'd survive long. A preliminary search of the area revealed no signs of people, Touya frowned, there had to be *something*.

Suddenly, something glinted on a ledge in the cliff face, too shiny to be a rock. "Oi! Birdie! What's that?" He called up to where Keigo was circling the air. Keigo swooped down and grabbed up the thing, landing, he showed off a familiar looking pin, Touya thought he'd seen it in a picture recently.

Thirteen stared at it for a moment before confirming his suspicions, "that belongs to one of the kids, they've been here."

"Well they also clearly left. So how does that help us?" Keigo asked, ruffling his feathers.

Thirteen huffed, "do you think a kid would leave something like *this* here willingly?" They shook their head, "they were probably up on the cliff when the storm hit, they might have tried to find shelter." They looked around, "alright, we'll split up, we can cover more ground that way, don't hesitate to call out if you think that you might be in trouble, we don't need another rescue on our hands, and I want to

hear call ins from both of you every half an hour, I'll do the same." Touya nodded, heading up the trail, looking for any place that a group of teens might hide in, probably somewhere low to the ground, assuming these kids weren't as insane as Izuku and Shoto. Then, after a moment of wondering if he was giving these kids too much credit, he started checking the higher hiding spots too, just in case.

After some searching, he found a place where a large tree had fallen over, and apparently taken half of another tree's branches with it, creating what looked like a cage of wood and leaves. Behind that he could just *barely* make out the entrance to something, a cave by the looks of it. Touya seriously hoped that the kids hadn't somehow gotten themselves trapped in there, but he called out just in case.

"Hey! Is anyone in there?" He waited a moment, before there was a soft voice calling back.

"Yeah, me and my friends are stuck." Well, at least he found them.

"Alright, I'm gonna need all of you to stay calm, I'm here to help," Touya called out before tapping on his earpiece, "Thirteen? I found the kids, they're in a cave down the trail, we've got a tree blocking the way." He heard Thirteen's voice quickly confirming that they were on their way, with Keigo adding that he'd make one last loop and join them.

It took a few minutes, during which he tried to keep the kids calm by asking them random questions. Did they hike often? What were their favourite places? Did they have any other hobbies? But when Thirteen showed up he quickly turned his attention to them, "what do we do?" He asked, the tree was huge, trying to push it out of the way didn't seem like an option.

Thirteen stared at the tree before nodding to themself, "our priority is getting those kids out, we just need an opening big enough for them." They activated their quirk, trying to see how much of the surrounding branches and leaves they could remove so that they could see the problem a bit clearer. What they were left with was a tree that clearly died long before the storm knocked it over, Touya had an idea.

"Can't your quirk put out fire?" He asked.

Thirteen nodded, apparently having the same idea, "first let me check, something." They called out to the trapped teens, "kids! How far away can you get from the tree?" The answer was apparently far enough, as they then nodded at Touya, "go for it."

Touya put on his mask and placed his hands on the damp bark, feeling the water sizzle under his fingers as careful sparks of blue flame burned at the wood, catching and burning a hole in the middle of the tree. Smoke filled the air, most of which was sucked up by Thirteen's quirk, but Touya had to stay close to the fire to make sure he didn't let a stray spark fly. He was glad that his mask filtered out the smoke, a precaution to stop him from suffocating from his own fire. Thirteen used their quirk to keep the fire under control and eventually put it out once they had a large enough gap. The kids barely needed to be told to climb out before they scrambled into the fresh air. Thirteen scanned them for any injuries before frowning, "weren't there five of you?" They asked.

Three of the kids looked to the oldest looking boy, who seemed to be panicking, "wait, Yuki didn't make it home? She went looking for her pin before the storm hit, we thought she got out." Touya's heart sank.

Oh no.

Keigo landed next to the other two, worry in his eyes and clutching the pin he'd grabbed, it was small, and had the picture of a Samoyed on the front with the word 'Blue' written on the back. Touya opened his mouth to explain but Keigo cut him off, "I heard everything." He glanced at the kids, showing the pin, he asked "is this the one?" He didn't want them to panic, but he needed the confirmation, and, perhaps he was hoping one of the kids might give him a clue.

The teens' eyes widened, one of them nodded "that's the one, that's her dog, where'd you find it?"

Keigo wasn't entirely sure he wanted to answer that question, considering it was on the side of a cliff near a waterfall. Instead, he asked, "did you guys go to the top of the cliff instead of sticking to the trail?" He really, *really* hoped they'd say no, that cliff went up for at *least* two kilometres, and the pin was barely three metres off the ground. If the girl went back to the top looking for it, and then the storm hit, well that was a long way to fall, and an even longer way for help to go, it would have been one of the last places they looked.

The teens looked at each other, sheepishness crossing their features, "yeah" one of them quietly said, "we thought it would be fun to see the top of the waterfall."

Keigo heard Touya curse under his breath. Thirteen was more composed, or at least, they weren't distracted by the anxiety of what

could have happened, “Hawks you’re the fastest person here, take the pin, search the area where you found it, we’ll get these four back to their parents.”

The command in their voice was enough to snap Keigo out of his panic, and he took off, breaking through the canopy and into open sky so that he didn’t have to worry about dodging trees. He flew towards the waterfall, going at top speed to get to the top of the cliff in a short time, fighting gravity and the air buffeting his wings as he flew almost directly up. His eyes scanned the cliff face, for even the slightest chance that the girl had landed herself on one of the ledges, but no such luck, either she was at the very top of the cliff, or...

He eyed the raging river, deciding that he didn’t want to imagine the other possibility. The top of the cliff was a much rockier area with sparse trees and mostly shrubs, but the mud still looked just as slippery, and those rocks were *very* sharp. He glanced around, sharp eyes taking in every detail he could, but not seeing any movement that could clue him in on where this girl was. He landed on dry ground, determined to avoid the *very* unpleasant feeling of mud squelching between his talons, and sent out all of his feathers, scanning the area for anything. If there was one thing he was glad to have learnt from the commission, it was the ability to use his feathers’ lightness to sense minute changes in the air, whether that was pressure, temperature, or vibrations. Because while he was certain that the commission intended this to be a skill he’d use as a spy, to listen in on conversations or locating enemies before they could locate him, it was still useful to look for someone, especially when searching on foot would take too long.

He closed his eyes, focusing on his feathers, parsing out what was a change from their own movement, versus what was around them. And then he had to narrow things down, he was looking for something approximately teenager sized, hopefully warm, anything smaller was probably an animal. He hoped he didn’t find anything *bigger* than a kid, he really didn’t want to deal with an angry bear, or something else that would probably try to fight him, or worse, kill a kid. He searched and searched, feeling some of his feathers get snapped, probably caught by an animal, no matter, he had plenty more.

There.

He stopped one of his feathers, calling the rest back to his wings, there were vibrations that almost felt like crying, unmistakably human crying. He’d found the girl.

Keigo flew off, homing in on his feather, and it didn't take long for him to spot the teen he was looking for, curled up in a ball, laying on the ground. He landed softly, bringing his feather back to his wings and getting as close as possible without startling the girl. He cleared his throat, causing her to jolt as she uncovered her head to stare at him, her hair and skin was covered in mud and it looked like she was scraped and bruised along her arms, her clothes had some tears in them and parts looked bloodstained.

He knelt down next to her, "hey, Yuki, right? Your friends said you'd be here," he put on his friendliest voice, "a lot of people are looking for you."

The girl sniffled, "are you a hero?" She asked, eyes growing wide as she took in his costume.

Keigo nodded, fishing his license from his pocket as extra proof, "that's right, I'm here to get you home." He looked her over, "can you walk?" He knew the answer was probably no, but he asked anyways.

The girl shook her head, "no, I, um, slipped, and," she started sobbing again, clutching her leg.

"Hey, hey, it's going to be alright, can I see your leg?" He asked, already reaching in his utility belt for some gauze.

The girl didn't appear to hear him and just kept muttering, "I was just looking for Blue, I shouldn't have lost him."

Keigo had an idea of what she was talking about, "is Blue your dog's name?"

She nodded, "it wasn't *him* though, it was-"

"This pin, right?" he held it out to her, smiling.

Her eyes widened, "where'd you find it?" Relief drenched her voice.

"It was at the bottom of the cliff, must have been knocked down there during the storm." He handed her the pin, and took the opportunity of her hands no longer covering her leg to assess the damage. It didn't look *too* bad, at least all the blood was dried by now, but there was some swelling that probably meant something had broken, he'd have to be careful getting her down. But looking at her current state, convincing her to move might be difficult.

Keigo took a deep breath and held out his hand, putting on his most charming smile, “come on, let’s get you down from here.”

The girl eyed him nervously, “how? It’s a really long walk.”

“Who said we were walking?” He grinned, fluttering his wings pointedly.

The girl shrank back “um, flying? From this high up?”

Oh boy, so she was afraid of heights, that just made things a million times harder. Keigo wracked his brain, trying to think of a way to convince her, he held back a sigh, “I promise, it’s going to be alright, I’ll carry you, so you won’t fall.”

The girl still looked unsure, and Keigo mentally cursed, not even *Touya* was this difficult, and that man was always convinced he was going to throw up while flying. Still, the girl was already scared, so he couldn’t exactly judge her for complicating his job so much. “Look, you can just close your eyes, and don’t look down, and I’ll try to get this over with as easily as possible for you, okay?” He looked at her, “please? Your friends are worried about you.”

That seemed to do the trick, as she finally nodded, “okay, please be careful.”

Keigo scooped her up, making sure to support her leg and not jostle it too much, and he flapped his wings with fast, short wingbeats, providing just enough lift to rise into the air gently before flying towards the entrance to the forest, where Touya and Thirteen would be waiting with the other kids and the parents. The girl closed her eyes tightly, and Keigo had a bright idea.

He let out a soft series of chirps and whistles, something which he’d only recently figured out he could even do, when he accidentally chirped at Fuyumi after she hugged him. It turned out he could do the full range of bird vocalisations from chirps to trills to the hisses of a raptor, and that range didn’t seem to match an exact species. Inui had theorized that it was a range common to the bird mutants in his bloodline, or that, like other birds raised without influence from their own species, he’d developed his own song, which was a theory that could never be proven, but Keigo like to think that was the explanation. He’d certainly had to practice to get anything remotely close to a melody, not just random sounds smushed together. And it had resulted in some, *interesting*, comments from Touya about how whoever said that birdsong was a nice sound to wake up to was ‘a

fucking liar who'd never had a bird in their house.'

But it seemed to do the trick, as the girl relaxed in his arms, letting him carry her down to the canopy below, and then staying as close as possible to the trees without going into the forest proper. Of course, he couldn't go *that* slow, his wings weren't built for low speeds, or gliding long distance, so he still held on tight to his passenger. And eventually, he could see the group of people at the entrance, he slowed to a stop as he landed on the concrete of the sidewalk. The other kids practically swarmed him to see if their friend was alright, and the adults had to gently pull them back, letting him give the girl to the paramedic for treatment, he rattled off the list of injuries he had spotted before being dragged away by Touya.

"*Help me*," Touya hissed in his ear, Keigo looked around, immediately spotting the problem, and he chuckled.

"Really Ashes? You have *four* siblings, can't you handle a few nosy kids?" He whispered back, noticing the teens had gathered around Kurose and were now asking a bunch of questions while the parents tried to keep them quiet and thank Kurose at the same time.

Touya just glared at him, and he sighed, letting Touya walk behind him as they approached the group. The kids' eyes immediately snapped to them, and they were hit with a barrage of questions, Keigo could actually keep up with most of it, and Touya eventually started answering too when he saw Keigo start to flounder.

And then one of the kids spoke up, "are you guys new? I don't think I've seen you on the news before."

Keigo shrugged, rather apprehensive about that question, well, technically speaking they weren't all that 'new', maybe to this particular field, but not hero work in general, but both of them would prefer it if nobody here knew that, "uh, yeah, we're pretty new."

Kurose intervened, sensing his discomfort, "they're my proteges, for now at least." Keigo didn't miss the pride in their voice when they said it, that the two of them would soon be able to go solo without the need for a more experienced pro supervising them.

"Oh *cool*" one of the teens' eyes gleamed in a way that Keigo was partially sure wasn't natural, "you get to train under *Thirteen!?* Does that mean you're rescue heroes too?"

Touya took that question, taking pity on Keigo's flustered state, "yep,

we are." Maybe it was an odd specialization given their history, but they'd both agreed on it, for one, it was a field that usually had less media attention, something which they were both glad for. And more importantly, it was a field fully focused on saving people, no villains they had to fight, and most of the blood they'd see wouldn't be spilled by their own hands, Keigo in particular found that a comfort, he was sick of his hands being stained red. Touya nudged Keigo, and it took him a moment to realise that he should probably say something.

He gave them all his most charming smile, "I'm Hawks, nice to meet you." He looked back at Touya, *your turn.*

Touya half glared at him, but introduced himself anyways, "and I'm Dabi." Okay, that was a bit curt, but not much more could be expected when dealing with Touya.

The teen eyed both of them, "are you two a team? You have one of his feathers" he pointed to Touya's earring.

Keigo laughed, "well, someone's got an eagle eye," he ignored Touya's quiet groan at the bird pun.

"Yeah we're a team," Touya interrupted before Keigo could say anything else.

One of the other kids now spoke up, "if you're a team, does that mean you have a team name? Like the Wild Wild Pussycats do?"

Keigo smiled, "we certainly do." It had taken them several days of brainstorming to come up with the name too, a word that most people would hear and think it was just a fun name based on their quirks, but something that meant so much more to them and the people that knew them, a word which embodied their lives, their stories, and this second chance they'd been given.

"Phoenix."

Chapter End Notes

> Well that was a doozy of a chapter to write.
> Sorry to any who might have wanted these two to be limelight or underground heroes, I know I got a lot of comments for the second.
>
> Fun Fact: both Touya and Keigo's POVs are 2250 words long (It took me two hours to get the numbers right, I am *not* letting it go

unnoticed.)

Chapter 63: A Little Vampire.

Chapter Summary

Izuku makes a new...
friend???

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku sighed, they were starting to get bored as they paced around their room, listening to the sounds of the night just outside their window. They were unable to fall asleep even though it was far past the time when they should have been in bed, heck, Papa had probably fallen asleep an hour ago! They flopped onto their bed, tossing and turning until they simply couldn't anymore and got back to pacing. Maybe they weren't being reasonable, their dad surely had his reasons for benching them tonight, but he'd *promised* that they could go on patrol soon, as soon as the case was finished. They stared out of their window with a pout, it just wasn't fair.

They knew Dad would be fine, they *knew* that he and Uncle Sekijiro could handle whatever was thrown at them, but Izuku couldn't help but worry. And the worst part was that they had no idea why *this* was the case they were anxious about, when normally they'd just be content to stay at home only annoyed cause they couldn't patrol. They sighed, they really should get some sleep, Papa would be worried if they didn't.

Izuku glanced at the door, maybe they could just read over the case file one last time, then they'd go to bed. They didn't much bother to be quiet as they flicked on the lights and shuffled about the living room, rummaging through the drawers for the file, it wasn't like Papa could hear them. Although they did accidentally wake up Mop, who glared at them, flicking her fluffy tail in a way that meant she'd be remembering this for a while. Izuku eventually found the file, it was pretty heavy, they could have sworn there were a few more papers in it than the last time they'd looked, perhaps more incident reports that had been linked back to this culprit.

Izuku opened the file, flicking through the various incident reports

before finding the pages detailing the mission. It was a case of repeated, mysterious attacks in a certain area, which just so happened to fall near Dad's patrol route, which is why he'd been dragged into this mess, even though he was fully confident that Uncle Sekijiro should have been the only hero assigned. Izuku giggled to themself, those two, despite their grumbling, were probably having way too much fun needling each other until one of them gave up, which wasn't likely to happen, ever. The incidents themselves were really weird, with many of the attacks killing small wild animals, with the reports only coming in because people had started to link that to the few attacks being done on humans. And the attacks on humans weren't a pretty sight at all, Izuku thought as they looked through some photos, the people looked deathly pale and appeared to have been attacked by something stabbing them. The people hadn't been killed though, just hospitalized, but none of them could remember who exactly had been the one attacking them, although some people claimed that the person was melting. Though what *that* meant nobody had any idea, as there weren't any people living in that area with a quirk that matched the description. DNA testing hadn't revealed anything either, coming up with a different person's name each time, but every time they investigated further, there was proof of the person's innocence. The police had been all too happy to hand this over to some heroes.

Izuku huffed, closing the file and putting it back in the drawers, well, that didn't really help. They turned off the lights and returned to their room, pacing around and wondering how the mission was going. Their eyes caught on their notebooks, maybe they could do some work to get their mind off of the whole thing. They flipped open their latest analysis notebook, looking at the handful of scribbles that they'd done trying to figure out what kind of quirk could have caused any of this. The only real fact that they knew was that it was a blood related quirk, something that can drain blood with barely a trace. A dangerous person if they got a hold of you, but that wasn't really why Izuku was worried, their dad could just cancel the quirk, and if the criminal was smart they'd steer clear of fighting Uncle Sekijiro, unless they wanted their quirk to backfire spectacularly.

They took their notebook and their pencil case, sitting comfortably on their windowsill as they added some random notes, speculation mostly. Perhaps if they could figure out what the quirk was, then they could actually help the investigation without being Wraith and putting themself in danger. The chill of the night air was a nice way to keep their mind from wandering too far, and reminding them not to fall off the sill, even if they landed safely it would be a pain to get back up.

Izuku looked back into their room, then out into the open city, well, it couldn't hurt to just go for a run, could it? They leapt to the next roof over, tucking their notebook under their arm, there was no need for their costume, they weren't going to get in any fights, their parents would be upset if they did. They leapt between buildings with a clear destination in mind, and it didn't take very long to reach the rooftop they were looking for.

They smiled as they landed on the familiar old crumbly concrete, not much had changed in the three years since they'd first set foot here, on the rooftop they used as a training ground back before they'd been taken in by their parents. They sat on the edge and crossed their legs, opening their notebook and smiling as the sounds of rats and other critters scurrying about and knocking over bottles filled the air.

They paused, muscles tensing, some of those noises sounded too heavy to be an animal. They hastily backed away from the edge, collected themself, then carefully peeked into the alleyway, if this was trouble, they were getting out of here before they got caught up in it all.

Huh, it was a kid, or, at least they looked like a kid, around Izuku's age too. They were hunched over something, Izuku couldn't quite make it out.

What was a kid doing out here alone? Izuku creeped closer to the edge of the rooftop, glancing around to check all the escape routes they could find. Then they scampered down to the alley, glancing at the other kid, making sure they weren't noticed.

Izuku felt themself nearly fall the rest of the way down when they realised that the kid, a girl maybe, was holding a dead rat. Okay, they'd seen weirder, right? They shook their head, creeping closer to the girl, making sure to stay silent.

Unfortunately for them, luck seemed to be against them tonight as another rat chose that particular moment to scurry in their direction, causing the girl to startle and look up at Izuku. Oh, *oh no*, Izuku stared at the girl's face, more specifically her mouth, which was covered in blood. Izuku glanced at the rat, which had a bite mark in its side, and quickly, the pieces clicked together. Well, it looked like they'd just found the culprit of all those attacks.

The girl quickly hid the rat behind herself, staring wide-eyed at Izuku.

Izuku wasn't quite sure what to do, so they just waved, slightly freaked out by the possibility that they were going to get bitten to

death. Then again, it looked really odd how the girl's teeth had somehow not made as much of a mess as one would expect, and the answer became clear when she smiled, showing off a pair of sharp canines. Now Izuku was curious, and she *was* just a kid after all, and while Izuku knew that didn't mean much if she had skills or a powerful quirk, maybe she would answer some questions.

Izuku glanced at the rat behind her, moving cautiously and keeping a close eye on the girl, they walked around her, picking up the little creature, examining the wound. Yep, it looked just like the photos, and while it wasn't a stab wound, it still wasn't bleeding, just like the other dead animals.

Himiko stared in confusion as the stranger wrote something down in the book they were carrying, staring at the remains of her dinner, weren't they going to scream and run? Or threaten to call the police? The kid then turned to her inching closer until they were very obviously staring at her fangs, writing down something else. "Um," Himiko began, "hi?" If this kid wasn't going to be upset, maybe she just found a new friend!

The kid looked up from their book, then they wrote something down and showed her the page, which looked like a whole bunch of gibberish, Himiko wasn't even sure those were all letters. But there was one word she could read, *'hello.'* Huh, couldn't they talk? Weird, but alright.

She grinned at them "I'm Toga Himiko, what's your name?"

'I'm Izuku,' didn't they have a family name? Maybe they were even weirder than Himiko, they wrote something else down, *'were you drinking that rat's blood?'* Himiko shuffled her feet and nodded, *'how?'*

Himiko wasn't quite sure what her new friend was asking, but they were definitely a new friend now. "I bit it!"

Izuku shook their head, *'I figured that out, but why isn't there blood everywhere?'*

Himiko giggled, "because I drank it silly!"

Izuku tilted their head, *'so, do you drink people blood too?'* Oh, Himiko wasn't sure she wanted to answer that, but oh well, she liked this kid, and if they tried to run she would love a taste of their blood.

"Yep! But, I try not to."

Izuku wrote something down in that weird gibberish, then, *'so is that a side effect of your quirk, you need to drink blood?'*

Himiko shrugged, "not sure what that means, but I think it's my quirk, part of it."

'Part of it? What's the other part?'

Himiko shrugged again, "don't know, but sometimes, after I drink, people don't recognize me, and there's this grey goop stuff that's weird and sticks to my clothes."

Izuku looked even more intrigued, a look in their eyes that made Himiko wonder if that was what people saw when she smelled blood. But then they looked up at the sky, and Himiko couldn't tell what they were looking for, but they wrote something down, *'my parents are going to be worried if I don't go home now, can we meet here again? I have so many questions.'*

Himiko nodded excitedly, "of course new friend!" Wait, parents? Would they tell their parents? Himiko frowned, grown-ups didn't like her, they called her mean names.

Izuku looked up from their notebook, they wrote something down, *'is something wrong?'*

Toga bit her lip, "are your parents nice?" She asked.

Izuku blinked at her not understanding for a second, then it clicked, oh, she has a blood quirk, people probably hate her. Izuku debated what to do, on one hand, they knew their family wouldn't care about her quirk, even if they somehow did Uncle Sekijiro would chew them out for it. On the other hand, Toga didn't know that, and she might never talk to them again if they went and told. On the *other* other hand, Toga was currently the answer to the case their dad and uncle were working on, even if nobody knew it was *her*, and they really should say something. But they still remembered what it felt like, to be absolutely terrified to tell anyone that they were quirkless, even if their parents trusted the people, Izuku couldn't. And their parents had respected that, because even if they wouldn't get hurt, Izuku would still feel upset about it.

Izuku nodded, writing in their book, *'my parents are nice, but I won't tell them if you don't want me to.'* They might get in trouble for this when their family eventually found out, but they didn't think anyone would be *too* upset.

Toga grinned sharply, “thank you Izuku!”

Izuku smiled back, leaving a small note on the ground, *‘I’ll see you here next week.’*

They scampered back up to the rooftop and made their way home. They got home before Dad did, slipping into their room and crawling into bed, finally falling asleep.

Chapter End Notes

Here, have an early chapter.
(mostly because it was either that or be a whole day late)

Anyways,
New Character Unlocked!

Chapter 64: Field research.

Chapter Summary

Izuku and Toga do some quirk analysis.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku kicked their feet lazily as they sat on the edge of the rooftop, their notebook in hand and their backpack hanging from their shoulders. Toga had promised to meet up with them tonight, so they waited with a hundred questions buzzing around in their brain.

It had been a pain to sneak away tonight, Papa had taken forever to fall asleep, and then Dad had dropped by the apartment an hour after he'd left for patrol because he'd forgotten some files. So Izuku had to wait for *ages*, and they'd almost gotten caught too. They wondered if Toga was having as much trouble as they did, probably not if she could just wander off and bite people without her parents raising a fuss. If she still had parents at all, Izuku thought, reminding themself just how easy it was for a kid to pretend to the world, especially when the world didn't like them. They could ask her about it when she showed up.

Speaking of which, Izuku saw a head of blonde hair peeking out from around the corner. They giggled, people always seemed to forget that, when you were this close up, you couldn't look around a corner before someone saw you. They jumped down to the ground and waved over at Toga, who shuffled into the alleyway, looking around and sniffing the air, did she have an enhanced sense of smell? That was incredible, and Izuku supposed it made sense. Seemingly satisfied with finding, or not finding, whatever she was searching for, Toga's demeanour instantly changed, and she skipped up to Izuku and hugged them tightly. Izuku froze, instinctively wriggling out of the hug and rapidly backing away, they felt bad though, when they saw Toga's face fall, looking like a kicked puppy.

They brought out their communication notebook, *'sorry, could you warn me next time?'*

Toga read it and nodded, although she still looked a bit hurt "I'm sorry, I swear I wasn't going to bite or anything!"

Izuku shook their head, oh, of course she'd think that's why they were upset, *'I know, I just don't like people hugging me like that.'*

Toga's eyes lit up again, "oh, okay!" Then she climbed up on the lid of the dumpster, sitting down and crossing her legs, "so, what did you wanna talk about?"

It was Izuku's turn to be all excited now, as they quickly scribbled out, *'I want to figure out your quirk!'* They looked around the area, hmm, maybe not the best place to conduct a detailed analysis, they walked further down the alleyway until they found a spot that Toga could probably climb, they waved her over and began making their way up to the rooftop. They looked down to see that Toga was just standing there, looking confused, Izuku sighed and motioned for her to follow them, to which she stared at the wall for a moment before shrugging and doing her best to follow the same path that Izuku had, going from windowsills to half-broken pipes. She paused at the last set of footholds looking uncertain about the steadiness of the protruding bricks Izuku had grabbed to hoist themself up. Izuku looked at her, quietly encouraging her to just get a little higher, they held out their hand, offering to help pull her up if she could just close the distance. Toga stared at them for a moment, before taking a jump and catching Izuku's hand in her own, they grabbed her arm with their other hand and helped her scramble onto the rooftop. She flopped on her back, panting as she stared up at the stars.

Izuku put down their backpack and rummaged through it, bringing out a ruler, sticky notes, a small tupperware container filled with a few medical supplies, a magnifying glass that Bibi Higari had given them, and some plastic gloves. By the time they turned back to Toga, she'd sat down closer to them and was now looking curiously at what they were doing. Izuku grinned and wrote down *'alright, time to begin, could you answer some questions?'* As they sat down with a pencil in hand.

Toga still looked befuddled but nodded, and Izuku gave her the list of questions they'd written down at home, opening their notebook to the page they'd started for her.

Toga's eyes scanned the list, and then she began at the top, "okay, well, I just turned thirteen last month. No, my quirk isn't like my parents'. I dunno what kind it is. I don't know what it does really, I guess it gave me fangs? And I think the weakness would be that I have to drink blood?"

Izuku dutifully noted her answers down in their notebook, it didn't give them anything useful they didn't already figure out, but they wouldn't be Nedzu's student if they couldn't work with limited information. They wrote, *'can you open your mouth?'* Toga again looked completely lost, but she looked like she was having fun, so she obliged. Izuku grabbed their ruler and held it to her fangs, checking their length in comparison to the rest of her teeth, it looked like they were both two centimetres longer than the average canine. What fascinated them was that her tongue looked like it had two thin grooves running laterally down it, huh, neat, Uncle Sekijiro would probably know what that meant, pity they couldn't ask it. They just noted the observations down and continued with the experiments.

"Hey Izuku? What are you doing?" Toga asked as Izuku pulled the disinfectant and a bandaid from the container they'd brought. They rapidly scrawled something and handed it over to her, continuing to grab whatever they thought they'd need for this next step, and also silently praying that they were skilled enough to lie to their parents faces after this.

Toga's eyes widened as she read it, scanning the words over and over again, "you want me to *what!?* Are you sure?" She looked completely bewildered.

Izuku nodded, and within a moment Toga's mouth stretched into a wide grin, "I knew I was right about you being a new friend! Maybe even a best friend!" She giggled, "you really want me to drink your blood?" Her eyes gleamed with what they could only assume was hunger.

They handed her a note, *'just a little bit, for testing purposes.'*

Toga nodded, still bouncing with excitement, "right! Well, I've never done this on purpose before, so um, just hold out your hand!"

Izuku obliged, and she held their palm steady as her pupils dilated, she then bit their hand, which, if Izuku wasn't prepared for it, would have made them flinch with the sharp stinging sensation. It got worse when Toga appeared to instinctually make a sawing motion with her upper jaw, slicing a line into their hand. She then let go of them and used her odd tongue to lap up the blood, the grooves on the side appeared to be helping to funnel the blood upwards into her mouth.

After a few moments Izuku pulled their hand back, and Toga's eyes followed the movement hungrily for a moment before she got a hold

of herself and shook her head, licking her lips which were now covered in blood. “Oh wow, your blood is really sweet! I like it!”

Izuku examined the cut on their hand with the magnifying glass, it appeared that only the two canines had broken their skin, as they could barely find any indents from the other teeth. And this line was much neater than any of the injuries they’d seem from the pictures of Toga’s, uh, *less willing* donors, probably because they weren’t struggling against her.

They hummed as they disinfected and, realising that a bandaid would not suffice, wrapped a bit of gauze around the cut. They were also keeping an eye on Toga, since, as far as either of them could tell, whatever her quirk *actually* was activated after she drank blood.

Izuku’s jaw dropped as, in front of their very eyes, a grey goop formed around Toga, and after a few moments, she was no longer standing there, instead they were face to face with a perfect copy of themself wearing Toga’s clothes. The other them, Toga, they had to assume that was still Toga’s consciousness, right? Looked at them oddly, “is something wrong Izuku?” Both of them were completely taken aback by the voice that came out of Toga’s, well, currently Izuku’s, mouth. Toga because she was shocked it wasn’t her own, and Izuku because oh my goodness that was a near perfect replica of their voice, despite the fact that Toga had never even *heard* their voice. Was the quirk automatically changing the shape of her vocal cords? Definitely, but the fact that it didn’t sound *quite* right meant that it was probably also something she was controlling, maybe on a subconscious level.

“Um, Izuku? What’s going on?” Toga asked, and Izuku managed to get past the uncanniness of having a conversation with themself just long enough to write an explanation, Toga’s, *their*, eyes widened “what? That’s so weird! And cool! But mostly weird!” It was clear that Toga was freaking out a little bit, but Izuku wasn’t able to calm her down since they weren’t much better.

Izuku decided the best thing to do was to wait until Toga’s quirk *hopefully* wore off. It took a few minutes of tense silence, but eventually the grey goop started sloughing off of Toga’s skin, and Izuku had to witness their own face melting away, revealing Toga, completely unchanged except for her skin and clothes being covered in a thin layer of goop. The two of them shared a look and Toga looked a little scared.

“So, my quirk is, turning into people?” She asked.

Izuku nodded, handing her a note, *'it looks like you can turn into whoever you drink blood from.'* The explanation didn't seem to do much to help her panicking.

"How didn't I notice before!?"

Izuku shrugged, *'how often do you drink people blood?'*

Toga looked down at the ground "I try not to, I swear, I just get so *hungry* sometimes, and, and then the next thing I know I have blood all over me and someone's been hurt."

Izuku frowned, so she didn't entirely remember attacking people? That certainly could explain it, if her quirk activated without her knowing, well, it would be hard to tell in the middle of a daze. They began to write an explanation, but Toga just started panicking again.

"What are dad and mama gonna say? They'll lock me in my room again!" She looked positively distraught. Izuku felt a familiar flame rise in their heart, well, they already knew Toga's parents wouldn't be the best, no good parent lets their kid run around unsupervised and starving, but it sounded even worse than they thought.

Izuku hugged her, ignoring the unpleasant feeling of the tacky residue, they pulled back, writing some words, *'they don't have to find out, this can be our secret.'* Toga nodded, wiping away some tears.

"Okay," she looked uncertain, but smiled anyways, "I don't have to tell them about this, but, if I can't control it, I'm gonna slip up, aren't I?" She asked.

'Then you'll have to learn, I can help you.' Izuku saw her eyes light up again as she read their answer.

"You'd do that for me?" She smiled, "thank you! You're the bestest most amazingest friend I've ever had!"

Izuku giggled, *'I'm glad to help.'*

Toga started to say something else, but was interrupted by a yawn, "oh *wow* I'm tired. Hey Izuku? I think I'm gonna go home. I'll see you later?" She asked.

Izuku nodded confirmation before figuring they should probably head back home too, so after helping Toga get down from the rooftops, they made their way back to the apartment. They stopped just before

opening their window to get rid of the gauze over the wound in their palm, they didn't need their parents asking why on earth they had gauze with them whenever they had gotten hurt. On that note, they supposed they should figure out what the heck they were going to even tell as an excuse, maybe they could convince their parents that they'd just fallen and hit something sharp, it wasn't like that could be disproven.

Izuku glanced around their room, wondering if there was anything they could use to make the lie more believable, they noted that the very corner of their shelf looked sharp enough to cut skin, with the right force. They ran the cut on their hand over the corner, leaving a bit of blood on it, there, that should work.

But they could worry more about that in the morning, for now they yawned and flopped onto their bed, wondering when would be the next time they could get away with sneaking out like this. Hopefully soon, they had only just begun understanding Toga's quirk, and Toga herself seemed like someone they would really like to be friends with.

Chapter End Notes

> This is so funny to me because they're just so unbothered by how weird the other one is, it's just like, "new friend? New friend!" Completely ignoring that one is a vampire who loves blood and the other has a quirk hyperfixation and zero tact.

Chapter 65: Don't pet cats when you've got places to be.

Chapter Summary

Izuku and Himiko go find some cats.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Himiko had started looking forward to whatever day she'd find a little piece of paper carefully tucked behind the dumpster in the alleyway she always hunted in, often ignoring the rats altogether to search for the precious calling card. A little square torn out of a notebook a while ago, now slightly grimy after half a month of repeatedly being left on the floor of a dingy alleyway, but the little green ghost hastily doodled with a marker was still clear as day. She'd asked Izuku why they chose a ghost, they'd just laughed, like there was a secret she wasn't supposed to know, and said that they used it to sign letters, it wasn't typical, but Himiko understood, she still dotted her i's with hearts, even if people said it was weird. Well screw them, she thought it was adorable!

She hummed as she skipped her way down the street, revelling in the smell of blood in the air, people really liked getting into fights around here. She ducked into the alleyway, beelining for the dumpster and nudging some carefully placed trash out of the way to find exactly what she was looking for. She picked it up, staring into the familiar little dot eyes of the ghost before putting it in her pocket. Time to start climbing! But first, Himiko looked around, snatching up the nearest rat and breaking its neck, just like Izuku had shown her, and she held it between her teeth as she made her way up. She took a jump onto the windowsill of one of the buildings that made up the alleyway, scrambling a bit as she barely pulled herself up, then she grabbed a pipe, then the rope that had been tied onto the rooftop generator.

By the time she got to the rooftop she was huffing and her legs and arms were beginning to feel like jelly, seriously, *how* did Izuku make this stuff look so easy!? She looked around the rooftop confused when she didn't spot them anywhere, there was no way they'd just left the

ghost and forgotten, they were way too careful for that. Then, her nose twitched as she picked up a faint whiff of their scent, she grinned, maybe they were playing hide and seek again! They'd done it before, saying it was because they wanted to test her, *something* capabilities, uh, what was the word they used? Old-factory? No, that wasn't right, whatever, it was about how good her nose was. She fiddled with the dead rat now in her hand, this would be fun.

She followed the trail to the generator, then the rooftop access, where the smell pooled, she grinned and looked up, spotting a tuft of green hair that couldn't quite be stopped from poking over the edge. "I found you Zuzu!" She still couldn't tell if they liked the nickname or not, but they hadn't stopped her from using it.

Izuku dropped down from their perch, smiling, they quickly wrote something down in their analysis notebook, which they still refused to read for her, and handed her the smaller pocket notebook they used for talking. *'That was faster than last time by four seconds.'*

Himiko gave them a toothy smile, that was good, right? Oh well, who could ever tell with Izuku, they just seemed to do whatever they wanted. "So, you do anything fun lately?" She asked, beginning to sip blood from her rat snack.

'Not much, I want to, but my parents are still busy, on the bright side, my uncle was babysitting me yesterday, we went to the park and got ice-cream.'

"Which one?" Himiko only had a vague idea of Izuku's family, she knew they had two dads, maybe two aunts, although sometimes they only mentioned one, at *least* three uncles, she was still trying to figure out the exact number, and a brother who was way older than them. They probably had a few more, but she wasn't really sure about some of that, still, she thought that was a lot already, and if they *did* have any more that would be a *huge* family.

'The one that wears glasses and plays pranks on everyone.'

"Is that the same one that drank an entire bottle of vodka in one go?"

'Yep, that's the one.'

Izuku began pacing around, which turned into a series of backflips and cartwheels that made Himiko dizzy just looking at it, she really wanted to know where they learned all that, their parents were so cool for letting them do that. She even used to think that was part of

their quirk, but now she knew otherwise. Her eyes softened at the memory, they'd been terrified to share it, and really only did it because she couldn't stop asking, she really should have known better, considering that she usually kept quiet about her quirk too.

"Wow, you're really that bored?" She asked as they took a leap from the generator to the access and back to the concrete.

Izuku walked back up to her, sighing, *'I don't know how much longer I can take this before I start sneaking off on my own,'* they wrote.

Himiko tilted her head, "but isn't that what you're already doing?"

Izuku shrugged, *'it's different.'*

Himiko wondered exactly *how* it could be different, but she supposed that it wouldn't be much of an issue after their dad got done with whatever he was doing, she hoped it would be soon, Izuku was so unhappy when they were bored. At least Himiko knew they were less bored when they were testing out her quirk, which she'd gotten pretty good with if you asked her, she could now control when she turned into people! Well, *mostly*, she hadn't had the opportunity to test that out much.

But there *had* to be something she could do to help out her friend! Himiko thought really hard about what she'd seen in the movies, what did friends their age do together? Well, she'd seen plenty of sleepovers, but that was out of the question, Izuku knew she didn't want to meet their parents, and her own would never let her have a sleepover with someone they'd see as a boy. So, what else? A walk in the park? But it was so late! And the park was so far away! She pouted, then she remembered something, Izuku once mentioned that they liked cats, there were a bunch of cats near this place! "Hey Zuzu!"

Izuku turned to her, tilting their head in question, "wanna go see some cats?" Himiko asked, getting an enthusiastic nod in return, "alright then, follow me!"

The two of them half-walked-half-ran, or rather Izuku kept trying to run ahead only to remember that Himiko could not keep up, to the place where she'd seen all those cats. As soon as they got there the sounds of meowing filled her ears and, judging by the very excited look on their face, Izuku heard it too. Himiko looked around, spotting many curious eyes staring back at the two of them from the darkness.

She glanced at Izuku, waiting to see what they'd do, the cats didn't really like her all that much, so she wasn't about to scare them off by doing something wrong. Izuku knelt down making a soft 'pspsps' sound and holding their hand out. And just like magic, one of the bolder cats, a big grey tabby with a missing ear, wandered out of the darkness and sniffed at Izuku's hand, they smiled softly as the cat began to purr.

"Woah" Himiko whispered, almost scared to ruin the moment, "how'd you do that?" Izuku smiled and shrugged, unable to answer considering that their hands were currently too occupied to write.

Himiko still couldn't get any of the cats to let her pet them, even still, she couldn't help but giggle as she watched Izuku slowly be overtaken by a pile of fluff demanding attention. They had cats curled up near their legs, pawing at their clothes and one particularly brave kitten had jumped up on their shoulders, it reminded Himiko of the pied piper, except Izuku would never lead a bunch of kids to their deaths. They looked so, serene, until they looked up at the sky and their eyes widened as they gently but hastily moved the cats away from themself, scrambling upright and adjusting their backpack to a more secure position.

They quickly scribbled out a note and handed it to Himiko before darting off, *'my dad's going to be home soon, I have to go.'* She frowned, she hoped they wouldn't get in trouble.

Shouta sighed as he unlocked the window to the living room, yet another unsuccessful patrol, well, for the case at least. It *had* to be a transformation quirk, it just had to be, how else would they keep finding unrelated people's DNA at the crime scene. And it didn't help that there hadn't been an attack in two weeks, so their list of evidence was slowly dwindling as they worked their way through and figured out what was and wasn't relevant or just plain useless. He was starting to lose patience and Sekijiro was about ready to interrogate every single person who lived within the area of attacks and see if they couldn't blind luck their way into figuring this out, the problem being that the police detectives had already tried that to no avail. The only lead they had was the knowledge that whoever it was could drain blood, yet a glance at the quirk registry revealed nobody like that in the area, and the few people that had been refusing to co-operate with the investigation didn't have anything remotely similar. Which meant that it could just be someone from outside the area who'd picked the town as their target, but he'd rather mark off the more obvious possibilities first.

Shouta carefully dropped to the carpet, and was a bit surprised to see Hizashi wide awake, gripping his speaker in one arm and pacing the length of the living room, “Zashi? What’s wrong love?” He asked, already running through the possibilities based on how upset his husband seemed to be.

“I think we need to talk,” Hizashi said, in that tone that suggested something was wrong, but he had no idea what, “have you noticed Izuku acting weird lately?”

Shouta frowned, “well, obviously, they’re upset, and I can’t exactly blame them but-”

Hizashi shook his head, “no, not that, I, I think they’re sneaking out.” Shouta stopped, mouth flapping like a fish, he knew they were antsy about being benched, but *this*? They could get hurt, killed, kidnapped, caught in a disaster! Shouta knew that they understood the dangers, that they understood why they couldn’t help the investigation, or go off on their own, at least that’s what he’d *thought*, after years of reminding them, of getting them out of their more reckless habits before they ended up like...

He shook his head, catching Hizashi’s terrified expression, they were both thinking of the same disastrous memory. They’d sworn they’d never let it happen again, to *anyone*, not their colleagues, not their students, and not *their kid*.

Shouta’s eyes flicked to Izuku’s bedroom door, but Hizashi just sighed, “they’re not there, I checked.”

“Well then why are we still here?” Shouta asked, gripping his capture weapon, “we need to go find them.”

Hizashi nodded, opening his mouth only to be interrupted by a soft thud from Izuku’s room, and Izuku’s familiar footsteps scurrying about. They both relaxed their holds on their weapons, Hizashi knocked on the door, and the noise stilled, Izuku knew they’d been caught.

The door cracked open a little bit, and a wide green eye peeked out from behind the wood. Hizashi and Shouta exchanged glances, “come on little listener, we just want to talk.”

Izuku opened the door fully and Shouta could see the window was still cracked open behind them, “kid, where were you?”

“I, um” Izuku looked at the floor as they shuffled out of the room, “I just went for a run.” They refused to look up, and Shouta knew they were lying.

“Izuku *please,*” Hizashi knelt down to their level, “you can’t just run off like that, you know how dangerous that is.”

Izuku looked up finally, “I promise I wasn’t doing any vigilante stuff, okay?” They said with a hint of exasperation in their voice.

Shouta and Hizashi both searched their face for any sign of a lie, and thankfully found none. Shouta moved closer, “Izuku, kid, is this about being benched?”

Izuku shook their head, then stopped and sighed, “a little bit, I’m sorry, I know the case you’re working on is dangerous and all, but I just can’t sit around doing nothing to help!”

Shouta inhaled sharply, “don’t tell me you’re investigating the attacks?”

Izuku stayed quiet.

“Izuku.”

“I’m not! I just, thought I’d help figure out the quirk,” Izuku still looked their parents in the eyes, but Shouta could tell they were omitting something, and so could Hizashi.

“And you had to run off to do that *because?*” Hizashi asked sceptically.

“Okay, *that* part was just to wander,” and again, they were hiding something. Shouta and Hizashi shared another look, on one hand, this was concerning, on the other, Izuku knew better than to hide something truly dangerous from them, that was the one thing they were confident in, because at the end of the day, their kid was a *good* kid.

Hizashi sighed, “Izuku, please, stay at home, just until the case is over with?” Shouta looked over at his husband with pity, he knew Hizashi would be offering to accompany Izuku to wherever they went if only he wasn’t so damn busy lately. And it wasn’t as if there was a sudden emergency, it was just that the man had three jobs, all of which had gotten just complicated enough that he’d been flitting about for the past few weeks trying to keep everything under control. Neither of them liked not being able to pay as much attention to Izuku as they

normally would, but, well sometimes that was just how it went when your work schedules were exactly as unpredictable as crime rates.

“I promise, as soon as it’s over you’ll be back on patrols, no caveats,” Shouta silently pleaded with Izuku, knowing that they’d see reason quickly.

Izuku looked torn about, something, clearly whatever they were sneaking out for was something they deemed important, but they sighed and nodded, “yeah, I’ll stay put, I promise.” And that was that, because Izuku never broke their promises, and neither did Shouta.

And surely after this was over, he could figure out what the hell they were up to.

Chapter End Notes

Oh no, no more hangouts for the gremlins :(

On the other hand, *damn it Izuku just tell your parents about Himiko!*

They won't tho, they understand her too much to go behind her back.

Chapter 66: Runaway.

Chapter Summary

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Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Himiko stood in the alleyway, staring at the spot next to the dumpster, an empty can of beans having rolled into where a little green ghost should have been waiting. Izuku never went longer than a few days without paying her a visit. Maybe they were busy, surely they hadn't forgotten about her, or finally decided she was too creepy to hang out with, no, they weren't like that, surely. She stood around a bit longer, expecting them to show up any minute now, just dropping down into the alleyway and apologizing for being late with that sheepish look that always seemed to make them seem harmless and unassuming. She glanced at the rooftop, and the path they'd made for her to climb, she took a deep breath and began making her way up to their usual hangout spot.

But the roof was just as empty as the alleyway below it, and all coming up here accomplished was making her exhausted, she glanced around, eyes failing to find any sign of the place having been disturbed lately. And the smell of new books and sweet blood she'd gotten all too familiar with was stale, barely noticeable under the hundreds of creatures that had passed across this rooftop. And no matter how much she strained her ears, and her hearing was very good according to Izuku, she couldn't hear the faint jingle of the silver locket they always wore around their neck, usually hidden by their sweater.

But still Himiko waited, her hand went to her pocket, where she'd so carefully hidden a small bracelet. It had taken her days to find all the beads she wanted, snatched from her mother's box of pretty things whenever she wasn't looking. The green string was woven into a neat little pattern at the ends, like she'd seen a classmate do for his necklace, making sure that the beads stayed put even when the bracelet wasn't tied. She'd been looking forward to seeing the look on Izuku's face when she showed it to them, she was sure they'd like it. So she waited, and waited, until the moon was starting to hang low in the sky.

But they weren't here, they hadn't been here yesterday, or the day before that, or the day before *that*. Surely tomorrow would be the day, she thought, pushing aside the little voice in her head reminding her that's what she'd been saying for the last week and a half.

She climbed back down to the alleyway carefully, almost falling a few times before she hit the asphalt with a thud. She walked back through the winding streets that would take her back home, where her parents would be asleep, uncaring if their monster of a daughter was in her room or not. Tears dripped from her eyes, falling onto her shoes as she walked, she did her best to wipe them away, but it was useless as they just kept pouring, leaving a salty tase in her mouth and stains on her sleeve.

She got to her street just as the sun began to rise, the dawn light illuminating nice suburban homes that stretched as far as the eye could see. The kind with nice white walls and neatly trimmed gardens inside precisely spaced fences, the kind where you knew the people who lived inside cared far too much about what others thought of them. Himiko hated it, why should she care if the other kids thought she was weird? She was happy when she was weird, and if that was true then what else could possibly matter?

Her house was one of the smaller ones in town, her parents preferring to show off through extravagant decoration rather than sheer size. She snuck around behind the house, where a single spot in the fencing was ever so slightly lower than the rest of it, just short enough that Himiko could grab the edge if she jumped, scrambling over and landing on her back in the grass. She stood up, shaking herself, off and sneaking past the back door, hugging the wall of the house until she reached the open window leading to her bedroom. She was grateful her house had only one floor, she didn't want to climb up to her window every day.

There was noise in the living room, hushed mutters that she unfortunately picked up on, she wiped the tears off her face and sighed, a smothering kind of tiredness hitting her all at once, hoping her parents would just let her be. She nudged her door open, peeking into the space where beautiful paintings hung, and various decorative vases and knick-knacks littered every appropriate surface. Her father was on the phone with someone, while her mother kept glancing at the front door, as if she expected someone to burst through it any minute.

Then, her mother's eyes locked on her askew door, and Himiko froze,

she had that look in her eye, the one that meant Himiko was in a lot of trouble. She stomped towards the door in that way that was almost too refined to be taken as angry, unless you knew her well enough to recognize the fury in the way her heels clacked on the floor, grabbing Himiko by the hair and yanking her out into the living room. Himiko yelped as she fell to her knees, quickly standing up and wondering what the heck she'd done wrong. She knew she hadn't done anything wrong, and she knew they couldn't know about her sneaking out to hunt rats, sure she had to do it every night now to keep from going crazy, but she didn't think it was that obvious.

"What did you do you little brat?" Her mother hissed, Himiko looked at her, wide eyed and confused.

"What, do you mean mama?"

"Some idiot cops have been asking around town," her father grumbled, "said they were conducting an investigation on some attacks in the next town over, something leeching blood from people."

Himiko felt the blood drain from her face, but, but she'd been good, she hadn't bitten anyone in ages! She held her tongue, the only person who could vouch for her wasn't here, and even then, her parents would never take the word of someone who was *clearly* just as, *unhinged*, as Himiko herself.

"You just couldn't keep your deranged habits to yourself? Now we will have to tell them all about *you*. Our reputation will be ruined!" Her mother snapped, she was always like this, but Himiko could tell things were different.

Himiko stayed quiet, she didn't like this, this was new and she didn't know how to deal with it, but her parents always liked when they could pretend they didn't have something like her for a daughter.

Apparently that wasn't enough this time. Her father turned to his wife, "come on honey, maybe this is for the better, once those heroes come investigating, they'll-"

Himiko didn't hear anything else, *heroes*, her parents had alerted heroes, was she really *that* dangerous?

A hand grabbing her arm snapped her out of her confusion, her father held her tightly as he spoke, "oi, brat, are you listening? Or are you just imagining your next victim," he spat. "you're going to stay put until those nosy heroes come take you away, got it?" He started

dragging her back to her room.

Himiko froze, no, please, they couldn't take her away, she knew what happened to people like her, kid or not. Her mind went blank, the only thing running through her thoughts being that she needed to *get out*.

She bit down on her father's arm, *hard*, blood flowing from where deep gouges lay in his skin. Her father yelled and yanked his arm away, turning and glaring at Himiko, "no, that, was the last straw, you *leech*." He raised a hand to strike her.

But he never got the chance, as fangs sank into the soft flesh of his neck, blood spurting out in a pressurized stream.

Blood coated Himiko's hands and face, it tasted rotten. Her mother stared at her in sheer horror, Himiko just tilted her head, staring at the knife in her mother's hands.

"No, *stay back*," her mother's voice trembled, but Himiko saw the blade glint in the yellow lamp light as it swung, felt the sting that went through her shoulder as it sliced, heard the clatter as it fell to the ground, smelled the bitter blood that spilled across the carpet.

She stared at the two bodies on the ground in front of her, blood pooling under them. She had done something awful.

She had to *run*.

The window to her room was still open, she tumbled onto the grass, staining the blades. The fence was slipperier than she remembered, red seeping into the wood and making it harder to haul herself up.

She dropped onto the asphalt, and she ran.

She ran until she stopped leaving bloody footprints, ran until she couldn't recognize her own trail, ran until there was nothing left in her body to keep her going, and then ran some more.

She ran until she reached an alleyway, where rats scurried under her feet and a patch of ground laid empty next to a dumpster.

And then she cried, sobbing until her lungs couldn't catch the air to keep going and her eyes went dry without tears left to shed.

And then she waited.

She waited for the little green ghost.

Chapter End Notes

Well, that's definitely murder.

Chapter 67: Another kid? Really?

Chapter Summary

Izuku finds Himiko.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku sighed for what must have been the tenth time this hour, they fiddled with a piece of paper in their hand, thumb running over their signature, they wished they could have warned Toga. She must be worried, or worse, think they abandoned her. Izuku crumpled the paper in their hand, throwing it across their room in a fit of anger, *damn it*, why did they have to get caught? They were so close to figuring everything out, to figuring out a way that Toga wouldn't get in trouble for the attacks, they just had to prove that she wasn't fully in control of herself when she got all bloodthirsty. If they didn't, well it wouldn't matter how much their family believed them, this wasn't like the situation with the Todoroki's or Keigo, or even their own, this was a public case, people *knew* what was going on and if it got out that either of the heroes knew about Toga, Izuku shook their head. Dad and Uncle Sekijiro would try, they would fight tooth and nail to give her the best chance possible, but it would be useless without proof, which would take weeks knowing the way blood quirks were treated, and they couldn't guarantee what would happen to her in the meantime.

They sighed again and hopped off their bed, yawning as they stretched, moving always seemed to help calm their nerves. They glanced over at where Shadow was curled up at the foot of their bed, ears and paws twitching as she chased something in her dreams, what Izuku would give to have their only problems be where to find the best napping spots and the occasional trip to the vet. They blinked, realising they'd started staring off into nothingness, maybe they should just go back to bed. Try to catch *some* kind of sleep despite the morning sun streaming in through their window.

They heard a loud exclamation of **"what the hell!?"** From the living room that knocked all the tiredness out of them. They peeked out of their door and saw Papa pacing around as he listened to whatever the

person on the other end of the phone was saying. Izuku also would have liked to know what was going on, but judging by the look on their papa's face, this was something they would have to wait to hear about, unless they tried to figure it out from the less useful half of the conversation.

Papa looked frustrated, "no, I heard you the first time dear, but again, *what the hell?*" Oh, so he was talking to Dad, Izuku supposed this was something to do with the case then, after all, Dad should have been home by now if it wasn't. But if this was about the case, then Izuku had to know what was going on, did they catch Toga? They couldn't have! She'd been doing amazing with controlling her hunger!

Whatever the response was it was long, since it was about a minute before Papa just sighed *"fucking hell,"* he muttered, "I'm gonna guess the case just got a way higher priority, huh?" Now Izuku was even more concerned, what the hell did Toga do?

"Who were the victims?" Papa asked, and then, after a moment, "a couple? I hope they didn't have any kids, that's a rough way to lose your parents." Izuku froze, the way Papa was talking, it almost sounded like, like this time it was a murder, Izuku shook their head, no, Toga wouldn't have killed someone, let alone *two*, her hunger wasn't *that* strong.

Papa's face went pale, "they had a daughter? She's not in the house?" Izuku's mind began racing, Toga *definitely* wouldn't have attacked someone in their own home, so how on earth? They carefully shut the door to their room, now far too anxious to even think of relaxing.

Their eyes darted to their wardrobe, they took a deep breath, this was a terrible idea, an awful, horrible, utterly insane idea. They waited until it was reasonable that they wouldn't have heard the conversation, then opened their door, "hey papa?" They asked.

Papa just hummed in acknowledgement, not really looking at them, instead searching through the case files and talking to Dad on the phone.

"I'm, gonna go for a run," Izuku made sure to word it carefully, just vague enough that they didn't have to promise anything.

Papa sighed, "just stay nearby, alright?" He was clearly more focused on helping with the sudden curveball and loss of a lead.

Izuku didn't answer as they slipped back in their room and grabbed

their costume, they felt awful for taking advantage of the fact that Papa was a bit too stressed out to clock their lie, but they had to find Toga before the police did. They gave Shadow a few pets, “don’t tell anyone, alright pretty girl?” They whispered, before opening their window and slipping out.

They slid down into the alleyway behind the apartment building, it would be too risky to take the rooftops in broad daylight. This was, a bit trickier to navigate, mostly because the alleyways here weren’t as interconnected as they were in the worse parts of the city, so Izuku found themself having to slip into and out of crowded streets on occasion. At least they had a decent guess of where they should start looking.

It took too long for their liking, every second that ticked by tracked in their mind as yet another second that Toga could be found, could be taken in, or worse, try to run again. They really couldn’t blame her for it, but they had a good idea of what would happen if the police found her instead of their dad or uncle, and none of the scenarios running through their thoughts were pretty ones. Izuku picked up the pace, going at a full sprint, which really wasn’t the wisest idea, they could be pacing themself better, but that really didn’t matter, if they had to fight someone they’d deal with that later, all they needed to do is find Toga, *now*.

They nearly tripped over their own feet as they sharply rounded the corner into the alleyway, eyes scanning frantically, searching for the slightest hint of movement or trace of blood, before they spotted a hint of blond hair poking out from behind the dumpster.

Toga had curled into herself, pulling her knees to her chest and hiding her face. It looked like she was covered in blood, no surprise there. Izuku walked closer, as silent as could be, although Toga’s hearing was usually good enough to pick them out at this distance. Izuku waited for her to say something, then realised that maybe she wasn’t all that present at the moment. They tapped their foot on the ground, just loud enough to catch her attention without startling her too badly.

Toga’s head snapped up, eyes wide as she stared up at them, she immediately began to scramble backwards, Izuku remembered that they were in costume, and probably accidentally scared her. They reached up to take off their mask but Toga stopped moving abruptly, she sniffed the air, seemingly having caught a familiar scent, eyes lighting up in recognition, “Zuzu?” She asked, voice hoarse like she’d

been crying for a long while.

Izuku took off their mask and lowered their hood, waving hello to Toga, they started to sign a greeting before remembering that she couldn't understand it. And they'd left their notebook at home in their hurry. Well then. Izuku stood awkwardly as they tried to figure out another way to communicate, then without warning, they had to catch Toga as she flung herself into their arms, sobbing as loudly as her voice could go. They embraced her back, uncaring of the sticky blood clinging to their skin and clothes, they had a million questions, but at least she was alright.

"Izuku?" Toga mumbled, and Izuku hummed, slightly confused and concerned, she'd stopped using their actual name ever since she came up with that nickname, which, by the way, was one that Izuku was *never* going to let Touya find out about, they'd never hear the end of it. Toga pulled away from the hug, "I did a bad thing," she admitted, staring at the ground in shame, Izuku already knew what she'd done, but they couldn't exactly tell her that until they found something to write on.

Toga took a deep breath, "I'm sorry, I, I don't know how it happened, I, there was a police investigation, my parents found out and, and they said they'd get the police to, t-take me away," she sniffled, "you know what happens to people like m-me, so, I panicked."

Izuku tilted their head, suddenly remembering that the couple who was murdered had a daughter, who was missing...

Oh.

Izuku didn't know what to do, even if they *could* say something, it all seemed like nothing could be enough to mean anything to someone who'd just killed their parents. But they had other things to consider now, this wasn't just an attack or two anymore, this was a double homicide, and they couldn't think of anything they could do anymore.

They looked at Toga, then at the ground, then the sky, the walls, and back at Toga, wondering how the heck they were supposed to communicate what they wanted. Then they sighed, grabbing her hand and beginning to walk in the direction they remembered her always showing up from. Toga pulled away quickly, "no, Zuzu, that's where my home is, and..."

She must have understood something in the look on their face, "you want to go see the scene for yourself?" Not really, but it got them

somewhere at least, so they nodded. Toga shook her head, “no, we can’t, the police will be swarming the place, and there’s gonna be *heroes*.”

Izuku didn’t know how to explain to her that those heroes weren’t going to hurt her, so instead they pulled their mask back over their face, making an exaggerated show of sneaking around something. Toga looked skeptical, “I know you’re sneaky Zuzu, but that won’t help against heroes.”

Alright, this was getting nowhere, but this was important, if they could guarantee that Dad or Uncle Sekijiro found them first, then Toga would be much better off than if she just hid here alone. Silently promising to explain *everything* when they could communicate with her again, Izuku started running in the rough direction, using both the knowledge of where their dad had said he was headed and whatever titbits Toga had mentioned about her home. Toga yelled after them, and they made sure to slow down to walk so that she could catch up. “I don’t know *why* you’re so insistent on this!” She asked, looking hurt by their constant attempts to get to the scene of her crime.

Izuku pointed at her, then at their own wrists and mimed pulling them apart like they were breaking a pair of handcuffs, it took several moments for her to understand, “you think there’s something there that can help me?” They nodded, close enough.

Toga looked back at the alleyway that was slowly getting further into the distance as the two of them walked, then, she sighed, “alright, but, I’m not getting anywhere near the place.” Izuku nodded in understanding as they pulled up their mask and hood.

The two of them walked for quite a while, with Toga taking the lead. Occasionally Izuku had to drag her into the shadows of the alleyway because they saw someone, sometimes people who were curiously following the *obvious trail of bloody footprints*, and every time they held back a sigh, shoving away their automatic want to critique the attempt at stealth. Toga had just murdered her parents and was probably having a breakdown about it, *and* she was just a normal kid, they couldn’t exactly judge her by their family’s standards of a clean getaway. They eventually approached what had to be the nicest looking houses Izuku had seen in person, aside from the Todoroki mansion obviously, not even Tenya’s place was this, *pretentious*. Toga stopped before they entered the suburbs proper. Izuku didn’t like the idea of leaving her behind, so they made sure she hid in the most secure spot they could find, inside an empty dumpster in an alleyway

that didn't look like it had anyone wander into it in a long time.

They looked around for a bit noticing where the most cops seemed to be gathered and beelining for that space, glad that almost everyone in town seemed to be in a tizzy about the whole murder thing. They stuck as close as they could to the shadows, being extra alert for people, especially police. They had no chance of actually getting near Toga's house itself, but they didn't need to, they could see exactly who they were looking for, and by some stroke of good luck, Dad and Uncle Sekijiro were about two houses away from the crime scene, questioning one of the neighbours.

Izuku waited patiently for them to be done and for the neighbour to walk away before they made a quiet whistling noise that made both heroes snap to attention as they frantically scanned the area. Izuku poked their head out from behind a tree and they saw the moment a look of utter distress crossed their dad and uncle's faces. After making sure no cops would see him, Dad walked right up to them, hissing quietly in a way that made it seem like he really wanted to yell, *"what the actual hell do you think you're doing here!?"*

Uncle Sekijiro took one look at the blood coating their hoodie, "Wraith, please don't tell me you went looking for the culprit," it said, with the tone of a man who knew that that was *exactly* what they were about to tell it.

Izuku nodded their head quickly, "before you yell at me, I need you to talk to her, *please?*" They asked, and something in their tone must have slipped, because their dad was looking at them with somehow even more disappointment.

"You know her," he stated simply.

"Like I said, no time to explain, just head to the entrance to the town," they said as they dashed away. They could hear Uncle Sekijiro mutter something under its breath but didn't pause long enough to hear what was probably several curse words and a disappointed sigh.

Himiko heard a knock on the lid of the dumpster and peeked out, smiling at Izuku, who gestured for her to climb out. She scrambled out of her hiding place and began to ask them if they'd found anything, when she faintly heard two more sets of footsteps rounding the corner. She attempted to hide again, but Izuku shook their head, holding her hand tightly.

The two people that walked into the alleyway stopped as soon as they saw her, looking between her and Izuku with unreadable expressions, but Himiko wasn't really thinking about that so much as she was thinking about the fact that these two were *obviously* heroes. She glanced again at Izuku, "hey, Zuzu, *we need to run,*" she whispered, tugging uselessly against their grip.

One of the people, a tired looking man with a weird scarf, sighed, "Izuku, what the fuck."

Himiko stared at Izuku, they knew these heroes!? They let go of her hand and signed something, Himiko wished she understood it, but the heroes seemed to understand perfectly. They both looked at her, and the taller one with the tusks began talking, "so, you're the missing kid, and, apparently also the one who we've been looking for."

Again, she stared at Izuku, who just gave her an encouraging nudge, well, if they trusted these heroes, she supposed she could too. "Um, yeah, I'm Toga Himiko," her eyes darted between the two adults, "are, are you gonna arrest me?" She asked, voice going quiet.

"That depends," said the man with the tusks, "but first let us introduce ourselves, I'm Vlad King, and this is my friend Eraserhead."

Eraserhead, grumbled, "hey Seki, you deal with this for a bit," He said before turning to Himiko, "I know Vlad can look scary, but just tell it what happened, alright? *I've got a call to make,*" he said that last bit while glaring at Izuku, who looked very sheepish.

Himiko stared for a bit, "I, um," she tried to talk, but the words just wouldn't come out, it didn't help that Vlad King was an intimidating man.

She saw Izuku sign something out of the corner of her eye, and the hero nodded, and then it spoke in a softer tone, something that Himiko would never have guessed could come from someone that scary, "hey, kid, relax, nobody's going to hurt you." It held out a hand, and at fist Himiko was confused, but then she saw, and smelled, drops of blood pool into the palm of the glove and begin to float. Did, did this hero have a blood quirk!? She glanced at Izuku with wide eyes, they nodded like they knew exactly what her question was. Vlad King then asked again, "can you just tell me what happened?"

Himiko took a deep breath, "I, my parents said you'd been asking around, and, and they figured out that I'd been sneaking out, and then, they said you'd come and take me away, and I don't remember

exactly what I did but, the next thing I knew, they were dead." She felt tears threaten to fall from her already aching eyes.

"Alright, that's," it sighed, "why were you attacking people?"

"I, was hungry," she said looking at Izuku, hoping they could explain her quirk a little better.

They got her signal and signed something, Vlad King nodded, "so, we've got a case of quirk-based starvation?" It asked, to which Izuku signed something else, "and the kid can't control herself, alright."

By then the other hero, Eraserhead, had shown back up, he looked directly at Izuku, "as soon as we're done here, me and Zashi are going to have a *long* talk with you, got it?" He asked sternly, and Izuku nodded, signing a response.

Eraserhead nodded, then looked at Vlad King, the two shared a look that seemed to hold an entire conversation in a span of seconds before Eraserhead turned towards Himiko, "so," he began speaking more to himself than to her, "what do we do about this? We can't let the detectives get their hands on her, if she's put in court, she'd probably be tried as a sane adult." Himiko flinched, not really understanding the technical words, but recognizing that a courthouse meant bad news for her.

"We can't do much else," Vlad King said, "even if we tried getting the evidence ourselves, that would take days, they won't let that slide, not with her, not with a homicide."

"I might be able to pull some strings, but it's not going to be much," Eraserhead muttered.

Vlad King stared at its friend, before huffing, "right, the lead detective knows you, not sure how much that helps us, she seems like a real stick in the mud."

"Harumi is *terrifying*," Eraserhead admitted, "but she'll at least hear me out."

Izuku smiled upon hearing that, and they squeezed Himiko's hand to reassure her. Speaking of which, "hey Zuzu?" Himiko asked, and Izuku tilted their head, "how *do* you know these heroes?"

Izuku shrugged, giving a 'I'll tell you later' kind of gesture.

Himiko looked back at the two heroes, “so, what happens to me?” She asked.

The two of them looked at each other, before Eraserhead spoke, “well, no matter what happens, I don’t think we can avoid you spending some time in juvie, but we’ll do everything we can to make sure whatever sentence you get is a fair one.”

Himiko again looked at Izuku, who nodded their confirmation that the hero was telling the truth. She looked back to him, “and after that?”

“Do you have any relatives you could go to?” Eraserhead asked.

Himiko nodded her head, “well, I have an aunt,” said aunt would probably never take her in, but she left out that bit of information.

Eraserhead nodded, “right, I’ll speak with the detective and figure something out.”

The four of them walked a little further into town, with Izuku and Himiko staying behind while Vlad King and Eraserhead talked with the detective, a stern older woman with floaty grey hair. After a bit of talking, and a few raised voices, the two heroes returned with some good news.

“Alright,” Eraserhead began, “it seems that, at least until the trial, which’ll be in a week, sorry we couldn’t get them to delay it, you’ll be allowed to stay somewhere under strict supervision, you won’t have to deal with whatever holding cell they try to throw you in at least.”

Himiko nodded, understanding what those words meant individually, but, well, from the little she’d heard, legal stuff sometimes makes words mean things that they normally don’t. But Izuku looked happy, so it was probably good.

“Now, the question is, whose supervision are we going to keep you with?” Eraserhead muttered, “I’m not sure Zashi and I can handle two kids right now.”

Himiko tilted her head, what was he talking about? Izuku cleared their throat, pointing to Himiko. The heroes looked at her confused expression and realised they might need to explain further, “basically you’ll be staying with one of us for a week,” Eraserhead explained, “well, us, or someone of the police’s choosing, but I wouldn’t trust those bastards as far as I can throw them, so it’s between the two of us.” Himiko nodded, she wasn’t too sure she liked that arrangement,

but it was better than whatever the cops would do to her in that holding cell.

“So, who’s taking me?” She asked, and watched the two heroes mutter between themselves.

Vlad King finally raised his hand, “I mean, I’d say I’d have to convince Ryo, but I think he’d bite me if I *didn’t* take the kid, besides, she’s got a blood quirk, and I could easily help her keep her hunger at bay.”

Eraserhead nodded, “sounds like a good plan.”

Himiko looked at Izuku, who smiled and squeezed her hand again, this wasn’t at all what she’d been expecting to happen, but these heroes were nice, and if Izuku trusted them, well, maybe she’d be fine with living with one of them for a short while.

Chapter End Notes

A "short while"? *Checks tags* You sure about that Himiko?

Chapter 68: Meeting your new wardens.

Chapter Summary

Himiko learns about where she'll be spending the next week.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Himiko wasn't really sure how long it had been since she'd last seen the inside of her home, how long it had been since she'd stained it red. It might have been a few hours, and indeed, the heroes assured her that it hadn't even been longer than three, but, it felt like she hadn't been here in days. And yet there it was, the blood that had dried into the carpet and stained the pale wood of the floor, the same blood currently staining her sweater and clinging to her skin, the smell was less overwhelming now, but still as bitter as when she'd spilled it. At least the bodies weren't there, no use preserving a crime scene after the culprit's been caught. She wasn't sure she could have kept from throwing up if she had to see the blank eyes on her parents' faces.

She felt a tap on her shoulder, snapping her out of her entranced staring and bringing her right back to her current predicament. She pulled away from the window, hearing the grass crunch under her shoes as she turned to face Izuku. They looked at her for a moment, expression unreadable beneath their costume, before handing her a note, they'd borrowed a notepad and pen from one of the detectives, *'are you alright?'* Himiko shrugged, she, wasn't really sure how she felt. She remembered when a kid in her class had lost a parent, it had taken them a full day before they started crying, and then it took weeks to stop, maybe this was like that, and she'd wake up tomorrow feeling sad and awful.

She glanced back at the window, seeing various people in white outfits sealing things in bags and taking them away, evidence apparently. She didn't know what had driven her to look inside, one minute she'd been standing near the two heroes, and then, the scary detective started asking questions, and Himiko didn't want to stick around anymore, so she'd occupied herself with whatever was closest.

Izuku held her hand and guided her away from the crime scene, handing her another note as they did so, *'the grown-ups are waiting for us.'* Himiko nodded and sped up to where the two heroes were still taking with the scary detective lady.

The detective took one look at the two of them and then marched over to Himiko, "so you're Toga Himiko?" She asked curtly, staring at Himiko with sharp blue eyes that made her want to sink into the dirt and never come out. She found it in herself to respond with a nod. The woman huffed and nodded to herself before making eye contact with the two heroes and walking away, Himiko couldn't tell whether that was good or bad.

"Toga," Vlad King tried to get her attention, but Himiko's gaze drifted back to the house, "hey! Kid! You with us?"

She startled at the suddenly raised voice, nodding rapidly "mhm."

All three of the others glanced at her like they knew what she was thinking, and Himiko was starting to suspect that they did. She cleared her throat, "um, sorry, what's going on now? Zu- uh, I mean, *Wraith*, said you were waiting for us?" That was still so weird, to keep their identity from being revealed, Izuku had told her that they were a vigilante, named Wraith, she supposed that was the reason for the ghost. And even weirder was that the heroes she was talking to were actually Izuku's dad and uncle, again, not what she'd ever have expected, but it gave her a bit more trust in these two, and explained how they knew Izuku.

"They're wrapping up the investigations," Eraserhead said, and Himiko realised that they'd walked a ways away from the house, just far enough that they wouldn't be overheard, "and I don't think any of us want to stick around for longer than necessary."

Himiko shuffled away so that she was standing closer to Izuku, realising that it also meant it was time for her to go somewhere new, wherever she'd be staying for the next week. At least it wasn't a holding cell, she was grateful of that, but, it didn't mean that she wasn't still scared, it was stupid, it wasn't like she was going to get hurt or anything, and this was *Izuku's* family, and based on what she knew, they were the last people who she should be scared of. Izuku seemed to have gotten the message and held her hand, squeezing it lightly as a constant reminder that they were there. She appreciated it.

The quiet was starting to get on her nerves, she glanced up at the two

adults, but they seemed to be having a silent conversation, and Izuku didn't speak, well, not in a way that made noise, so she was left with nothing but her thoughts. She didn't like that.

Finally she worked up the courage to say something, if only to get rid of the awful silence. She nudged Izuku, hoping they could get the adults to talk, "hey Zuzu?"

Izuku hummed.

"So how many people in your family are heroes?" She asked.

Izuku glanced at their dad and whistled, he answered for them, "almost all of us, I think it would be easier to count the number of civilians in the family, which is four by the way."

"Woah, cool!" Himiko's eyes sparkled, "so, mister Eraserhead-"

"Aizawa," he interrupted her, "my name is Aizawa Shouta."

Izuku gave their dad a surprised look to which he shrugged and said "well she's your friend."

Vlad King also spoke up, "yeah, guess we could have introduced ourselves sooner, especially considering I'm supposed to be looking after you now," it nodded at Himiko, "Kan Sekijiro, nice to meet you."

Himiko smiled, "right, so, if I'm staying with you, and, who's the other person you were talking about earlier?" She asked.

"Inui Ryo, my husband," Kan said, "don't worry, he's a real sweetheart."

"One might even say, a big ol' puppy dog," Aizawa snickered as if he'd said something incredibly funny, and judging by the quiet laughter from both Izuku and Kan, it must have been an inside joke of some kind.

After a little while, Himiko said goodbye to Izuku and Aizawa, after making sure that she could see Izuku again soon. She was allowed to take some of her things from her room, although she made a significant effort not to look at the living room as she grabbed some spare clothes, stuffed them in her school bag and practically sprinted back outside. Then she followed Kan all the way to what she presumed to be its apartment, surprisingly, it wasn't that far away, or if it was, Himiko certainly didn't notice, she didn't notice much of

anything.

She stood to the side as Kan unlocked the door, her sharp ears picked up two quiet barks from inside the apartment. And then, a much louder volley of barks and someone laughing. Kan smiled as it opened the door and a grumpy looking bulldog came charging out of the apartment on stubby legs, jumping up at Kan begging for attention. Kan began laughing, “hey pretty girl! How are you doing, did you miss me?” It cooed, giving the bulldog a scratch behind the ear before her stub of a tail perked up and she ran full force at Himiko.

Himiko squealed as she was toppled over by a very heavy, very slobbery creature. She vaguely heard Kan exclaim “Desmo! No!” As the dog started licking her face relentlessly. Immediately the crushing weight was gone as Kan muttered an apology while it picked up the bulldog, letting Himiko get to her feet. And now she heard someone else’s muffled laughing.

She stared at the new person, ah, that’s why she heard two barks, a dog heteromorph who was just as big as Kan, if not a bit taller, stood in the doorway covering his snout with a hand in an attempt to quiet his chuckling. If Himiko had to guess, this was Inui.

“Um, hi?” She waved a hand awkwardly, a little embarrassed by that first impression.

“Hello, Toga I presume? I’m Inui Ryo,” Inui waved back, “it’s nice to meet you, and I see you’ve already been acquainted with Desmo,” he tilted his head at the dog that Kan had carefully set down, and was now much calmer, sniffing at Himiko’s shoes.

Kan nudged her, “come on, there’s no reason to be standing around out here, I *really* don’t want to deal with any questions about why the hell there’s a kid covered in blood wandering around, got enough stares for it back on the bus.” Himiko giggled at that and happily stepped inside, looking around.

And the first thought in her brain was, *‘there’s so much stuff here!’* At first she couldn’t figure out why she found it so odd, her house had plenty of things, in fact, maybe even more than this! And her house was clean like this too, where every object in the room looked like it had been dusted recently. But then she looked closer, eyes honing in on an old looking book on the shelf, she didn’t bother to read the title, no, what she was staring at were the creases in the spine, the spot in the corner of the cover that had faded from being handled over the

years; and she was sure if she tried, she'd find similar signs of love worn into the other knickknacks around here. This was nothing like her house, where everything was kept pristine, only existing to make the place look pretty, everything around here looked like it *meant* something to someone.

She heard a chuckle from behind her and turned to face Kan, who was observing her with an amused expression, "well, good to know you like the place," it remarked, "you'll be staying in the spare room," it gestured to one of the doors before pointing at another one, "and the bathroom's there in case you wanted to get that blood off of yourself."

Himiko glanced down at her clothes, having kind of forgotten they were completely caked in blood. She took her school bag to the spare room, which was a lot sparser than the living room, she supposed that made sense if it was a spare, but it looked like someone had hurriedly emptied out the room and moved a mattress inside as an emergency bed. She shook her head, she could look around later, right now she *really* wanted to take a shower. She yawned, the tiredness from staying up all night finally hitting her. She grabbed some clothes from her school bag, shower first, and then take a nap.

When Ryo had gotten a call from his husband at an ungodly hour of the morning, informing him that it wouldn't be home at the usual time because someone had been murdered, he'd been expecting to be stitching up wounds when everything was done. Only to get a call barely three hours later about them now having to take care of a child for a week, said kid also happened to be the murderer and also the culprit in the ongoing investigation that Sekijiro and Shouta had been working on. To say he was unprepared was the understatement of the century.

He'd done his best to clean up the spare room, moving some clutter and a few of Sekijiro's older sketchbooks out of the way, and dragged an old mattress he'd found laying around into the room. Then he went to distract Desmo who was practically howling the building down because Sekijiro wasn't back at its normal time. But when he heard the key in the front door, he didn't think he'd ever have expected to see a little girl covered head to toe in blood splatters, looking halfway between lost and completely in her own head.

So while Toga got herself cleaned up, Ryo decided he needed to talk to Sekijiro about how they were even going to handle this.

He leaned against the wall, watching his husband who was seated on

the couch and showering Desmo with as much affection as humanly possible, “sometimes I think you love that dog more than anyone else in the world,” he muttered with fake annoyance.

Sekijiro laughed, momentarily pausing its petting of Desmo to give Ryo a few scritches behind the ear as well, “don’t tell me you’re jealous of our *dog*,” it exclaimed teasingly.

“I’m not! I’m just saying you spoil her!” He huffed as Sekijiro silently returned to utterly adoring the dog in question, “oh whatever, we’ve got more pressing concerns anyways.”

His husband looked at him for a moment, then its eyes jumped to the spare room, “yeah, we really do.”

Ryo took a deep breath, “alright, can you give me the rundown? What happened?”

Sekijiro chuckled, “you wanna take a wild guess as to who got involved?”

“It could be literally *anyone* we know and I’d be shocked.”

“Fair enough,” Sekijiro turned back to him, “turns out Izuku managed to befriend little miss Toga a couple weeks ago, and didn’t bother telling anyone until they practically dragged her to me and Shou this morning.”

Ryo sighed, putting a hand on his snout, “I feel like I should be more surprised about that.” That kid had a habit of making things simultaneously twice as simple and a hundred times more complicated.

“Eh, at least it let us figure out a way to keep her out of police custody until her trial.”

Sekijiro’s expression turned serious for a moment, “Ryo, *the kid killed her own parents,* I know she’s acting all fine, but…”

It glanced at him, knowing he’d have a better understanding of all this, but Ryo just sighed, “I can’t tell just yet, but I’ll talk to her when she’s had some time to process everything, let’s just give her some space ‘til then.”

Sekijiro nodded, “alright, just, keep an eye on her, you don’t hurt someone you’re close to without feeling horrible about it,” its gaze

trailed to the barely visible scar on Ryo's shoulder.

Ryo tilted his head, blocking his husband's view of the scar, "whatever happens with her, I'll be there to help."

Chapter End Notes

Aww, Himiko is home, not that she knows it yet.

Also you cannot convince me Kan isn't 100% the most doting dog dad you've ever met.

Also *totally* unrelated, the scientific name for the subfamily of bats we'd refer to as "vampire bats" is desmodontinae.

PS. if the chapters start getting shorter I apologize, but college has been kicking my ass lately.

Chapter 69: Someone give this kid therapy.

Chapter Summary

Inui and Himiko have a talk.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Himiko woke up with a yawn, uncurling from where she'd fallen asleep clutching her school bag. She blinked, staring at dark green walls that *definitely* would have caused her parents to freak out if they ever saw something like that in *their* house, so obviously she wasn't at home. She yawned again, clumsily rubbing the sleep from her eyes, wondering why her limbs felt so heavy. She rolled off the mattress, dragging herself to her feet; she tried to stretch, putting her hands together and pulling them as far above her head as possible, rising on her tiptoes to get just a bit further, but she just succeeded in falling backwards onto the mattress. Her nose twitched, picking up the smell of blood, some part dried, some part faded like it had been washed away, but still stinking rotten, her nose wrinkled, wondering where that smell was coming from.

She didn't have to wonder long, it just took one look at her school bag to tell her, with small brown stains where blood-soaked hands had carried it, who knows how long ago. That's right, she wasn't at home, not after what she'd done. She raised a hand up to her face, examining each of her fingers, seeing the way the faint stain of blood discoloured her skin, seeing the way it almost seemed to come to life and drip down her hand, it was mesmerizing.

There was a quiet knocking on the door, she nearly didn't hear it, but it was enough to snap her out of her reverie. She wondered who it was, she didn't *think* either of the two heroes were capable of walking up to the door without her noticing, not with their size, but who knows. Also, she was certain that she hadn't locked the door when she went to sleep, so why bother knocking in the first place? The knock came again, a little louder, but still as quiet as a mouse.

"Hello?" Himiko called, wondering what was going on, she got up and opened the door. It took a few moments for her brain to recognize Kan without its costume, but once she did, she gave a hesitant smile.

“Hey kid, glad to see you’re up,” Kan gestured for her to follow it, “you slept the whole day you know? It’s nearly nine pm.”

Himiko frowned, she hadn’t meant to sleep that long, it was just going to be a little nap, Kan had said it would explain some stuff after she slept, and now she’d gone and made it have to wait until well into the night. Kan seemed to pick up on her irritation, and it didn’t seem too upset, “don’t fuss about it, you didn’t sleep last night, and with, well, *everything*, you looked like you really needed the rest.”

Well, she supposed that was true, even if it wasn’t really helping her feel any better about all of this. She followed it to the living room, immediately catching the attention of Desmo, who came trotting up, wagging her stubby tail. Himiko quickly set her school bag aside and knelt down to give Desmo some pets and head scritches, the dog didn’t seem to mind the blood on her hands, panting happily. Kan seemed to approve of this, quietly chuckling to itself before heading to the kitchen.

“Hey Ryo, Toga’s awake,” it called, and Inui poked his head out of one of the two rooms Himiko didn’t know about, a study maybe? Or the main bedroom?

“Oh, hi there,” Inui tilted his head in greeting, one ear turning towards Himiko while the other stayed locked on Kan.

She was just about to reply, when the smell of food hit her nose, and her stomach started growling, she immediately turned around to see that Kan had put a bowl of soup on the table. She stared at it for a moment, then, glanced at Kan, who just smiled, or, as much as one *could* smile with tusks like that.

“I know you didn’t have anything to eat since at *least* last night, considering you slept thorough breakfast, lunch *and* dinner. So we saved something in case you woke up before morning,” it explained, noticing that she was hesitant to eat.

Himiko was still reluctant, all the manners that had been taught to her said that you shouldn’t just take someone else’s food, but if it was offering, she supposed that didn’t matter anymore. She picked up the spoon, careful not to handle it too much, otherwise the blood staining her hands could stain it too. As she ate, it seemed her body finally caught up to just how hungry it was, she nearly burnt her tongue trying to gulp down the reheated soup. Eventually she forced herself to slow down, remembering her mother’s admonishments that eating

too much on a hungry stomach can make you throw up, and she definitely didn't want to waste Kan and Inui's kindness.

Her ears also picked up the sounds of whispering, even if she couldn't hear exactly what the adults were saying, she glanced at them from out of the corner of her eye, noting that Kan had a *very* worried look on its face. And, eventually, Inui muttered something back and nodded, whatever he said was clearly helpful as Kan visibly relaxed, huh, she wondered what that was all about.

When she finished eating, she realised that the only person left in the room was Inui, somehow, Kan had left without making enough noise for her to notice, where was it? Didn't it say it was going to explain everything? Inui must have noticed her confusion because he sighed, "relax, it's still around, I just convinced it to go to bed," that, wasn't really why she was concerned, but good to know she supposed.

"Um, so, how strict exactly is 'strict supervision' in my case?" She asked, taking a seat on the couch and observing Inui walk around.

Inui's ear flicked, although what that meant, Himiko had no idea about, she didn't know much about dogs, "well, it's like house arrest, but, you know, you haven't been convicted yet," he was clearly trying to word this carefully, in a way that she'd understand.

"So I have to stay indoors, for the whole week?" She asked, to which Inui nodded, "oh, that's," she furrowed her brow, fiddling with the hem of her skirt, and stopping before it got stained from her hands, "does that mean you two have to stay at home too, since you're supposed to be watching me?"

"Well, *at least* one of us has to be here to keep an eye on you, but that just means that if one of us leaves the other can't go until whoever left comes back," Inui explained, "most likely, that's going to be me."

Himiko hummed curiously, "you? Why?"

Inui chuckled, seemingly amused by her questions, "because Sekijiro has a class to teach, and I think Shouta would actually murder it if he had to deal with both hero course classes at once."

"Class?" Himiko asked, and then, "wait, Kan and Aizawa work at the same place?"

"Oh, did Izuku not tell you?" Inui asked, genuinely surprised, "I thought they'd at least *mention* that most of our family works at UA."

Himiko's eyes widened, awestruck, "huh, really?" No wonder Izuku was so awesome, they'd probably been training for years! Maybe even *at* UA!

Inui huffed, seemingly used to this reaction, "maybe it'll talk about its former students if you ask nicely enough." He looked at Himiko, and she wondered why he seemed so curious, or if that expression was curiosity at all.

Finally, after a moment, he asked, "are you alright Toga?"

Himiko blinked, "um, yeah, why?"

Inui's ear flicked again, "just wondering, you seem a little, spacey, didn't know if that was normal for you."

Himiko wasn't sure what that meant, sure, she liked to daydream a lot, but she wasn't sure if she'd been called 'spacey' since she was a kid, and she hadn't noticed drifting off more than normal. Then again, she hadn't noticed a lot of things today, even while she was awake. Oh. "Huh, I guess?"

Inui tilted his head, "well no-one's going to blame you for that, not after the day you've had."

Himiko frowned, she knew she should be super affected by, well, *killing her own parents,* but, every time she reached for something, *anything,* to feel about this, she came up empty handed. So really, that couldn't be it, if her being spacey was because of what she'd done, she'd be able to tell, she'd feel scared, or sad, or any of the other things that the lady who once came to her school to talk about mental health said were the reasons people got weird after traumatic incidents. "But," she began, before remembering that this was very much something that she should feel horrible about, and saying that she didn't would probably just add another reason why she was all messed up.

Inui stared at her for a moment, waiting for her to continue, "but?" He prompted, then, when seeing that Himiko had no intentions to respond, "it's alright, nobody's going to be mad, I won't tell anyone, alright?'

Himiko stared at him, surprised at the sudden softness in his voice, "um, I," she turned away, cheeks burning in shame, "I'm supposed to feel bad about what I did, right?" Inui hummed, asking her to continue. "Well, I, I don't know, I don't *think* I feel bad about it, but I

should, so I must be feeling terrible, right?"

"I don't know," Inui shrugged, "there's a lot of ways people can feel about stressful things, sometimes, that means feeling nothing at all."

Himiko stared down at her lap, "but that's going to go away soon, right, and then I'll feel awful about it?'

"Not always," Inui explained patiently, "sometimes it takes a few hours, sometimes weeks, and sometimes, it never goes away at all."

"So, I might just, *never* feel anything about what I did?" She asked, wondering why that thought made her so upset. A tiny voice somewhere in her mind told her that it was because this meant that everyone in her family was right, and she *was* a cold-hearted monster.

"Or you might feel something tomorrow morning, there's not really a way to tell."

Himiko huffed, going quiet. She heard a quiet whine and Desmo jumped on the couch, putting her head in Himiko's lap and looking at her like she knew something was wrong. Himiko smiled, petting Desmo, 'what a smart doggie,' she thought. Then, she pulled her hand away, staring at Desmo's fur.

Inui leaned against the arm of the couch, looking curiously, "you know," he said, "she's not going to bite you, go ahead."

"I don't want to get her dirty," Himiko muttered.

"Why would petting her get her dirty?" Inui asked.

Himiko frowned, "what do you mean 'why?' Look," she showed him her hands, "they're still stained."

Inui's eyes widened for a moment, and then they softened, "Toga," he began, with a tone that sounded like he thought if he said something wrong he'd scare her, "your hands are perfectly clean, you washed all the blood away this morning, remember?"

Himiko shook her head, "but, but it's there, I can see it!"

Inui moved closer, sitting on the couch next to her, "well, then maybe I can't see it," he held out his own hands, and Himiko reluctantly placed her hands in his. Inui carefully examined her hands, though she had a feeling he didn't *actually* think the bloodstains were there.

“Nope,” he said finally, “no blood that I can see.”

“But then, *why?*” Why could she still see her hands soaked red?

“It happens sometimes, our brains like to play tricks on us, especially when we’re stressed, and sometimes, our brains like to remember things without telling us they’re remembering.” He pulled his hands away, they were clean, as if he hadn’t just been holding her bloody hands, but, she’d *seen it.*

“Remembering?” Himiko examined her hands again, wondering if the crimson flowing down them wasn’t real after all. She frowned, *flowing?* Earlier it was just coating her hands. And, if she thought hard enough, it had just seemed like the faintest of stains when she woke up. Maybe Inui was right, and her mind *was* playing a trick on her.

“Even if you don’t feel anything, that doesn’t mean what happened doesn’t still *mean* something to you, and your brain is reminding you of that,” he explained, “it’s so hung up on that memory that it’s doing its best to make you remember, even making you see, hear, smell, or feel things as if you were back in that moment.”

Himiko frowned, “but I don’t like that, how do I make it stop?” She asked, tears beginning to well in her eyes. Desmo whimpered and pushed her head against Himiko’s side.

“You, don’t,” Inui explained, “you can’t just *force* your brain to stop remembering, but you can learn to recognize it, and to ask for help when you think it’s happening.”

“Help? Why?”

“Because even if *you* can’t tell that your brain is doing something that’s hurting you, someone else can, and they can help you realise too,” Inui gestured at Himiko’s hands, and she looked, noticing that the blood seemed, less *real* than it had a moment ago, she couldn’t feel it anymore, and it was looking transparent and then, gone.

“Oh,” she said, staring at her pristine hands, “thank you,” she trailed off, unsure of what to do now.

Inui tilted his head, “if you think your brain’s tricking you like that again, let me or Seki know, alright?”

Himiko nodded silently, suddenly very glad she had someone like Inui around.

Chapter End Notes

Ah yes, explaining the concepts of shock and PTSD to a (relatively) normal thirteen year old, good thing Ryo specializes in working with kids.

Chapter 70: Consider the possibilities.

Chapter Summary

Himiko sees her best friend again, and the adults have a talk.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV Switch

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The sunlight began to pour in through the spare room window as the birds started singing, heralding the morning, catching in Himiko's eyes and causing her to hiss quietly at the sudden brightness. She put down the string she'd been toying with, something she'd found hidden in the room, and pulled the curtains closed, returning the room to mostly darkness. She could already hear the footsteps of Inui wandering about the house, she had no idea if Kan was up, it was shockingly silent a lot of the time, and she was starting to suspect that any noise it ever made was on purpose.

She sprung up from her mattress, stretching her limbs before skipping into the living room. She said hello to Inui, who was sweeping the apartment, he woofed quietly in greeting and mentioned there being some breakfast in the kitchen. Himiko then said a very warm hello to Desmo who, over the last four days, had grown very attached to her, trotting over whenever she was in the room and greeting her with that adorably grumpy face. It also looked like Kan *was* awake, quietly drawing something in the corner, its eyes darting to her for just a moment of acknowledgment, and even after, Himiko knew it was keeping track of her, *wherever* she was. She'd found that out the hard way two days ago, when she tried to open one of the windows when its back was turned, and before she could even touch the latch it had called her out, *without even looking*.

She sighed, these heroes were really nice, but she couldn't forget that she *was* technically a prisoner here, even though they were treating her *much* better than the police would have. She hummed a tune as she grabbed the plate off the kitchen counter and scarfed down the food as quick as she could, then, her eyes darted towards the fridge, hand hesitantly reaching out to open it. She knew she didn't *need* to be sneaky about this, Kan had already given her permission to take as many as she needed after all, but she still checked that neither of the

heroes were looking when she slipped the packet into her hand. She retreated to the corner and quickly bit off the corner of the packet, careful not to spill any of the liquid inside.

Apparently you could just *buy* packets of pig's blood made specifically for people with quirks like hers, although these were already here. She had assumed they were Kan's, but she'd never really confirmed that, and she'd never really seen it drink any, and when she asked either it or Inui, both of them usually just brushed her off, she wondered if Kan just had better control.

Animal blood wasn't quite as satisfying as human blood, so she needed to drink it more often, but it was still tasty! She slurped up every drop she could get from the packet and made sure to put the empty packet in the bin before it stained something. And then she glanced at the clock, frowning, it was still only seven-thirty, she tapped her foot, she wasn't going to be very patient, not after all the begging it took for both of the heroes, and Izuku's parents, to allow her to see her best friend. But she'd made them promise to visit, and she was going to make sure that happened.

So she might have annoyed her wardens a bit throughout the day until she decided to retreat to the spare room until the time came. And a few hours later, as the afternoon had begun, she heard more than one set of footsteps, she heard *two*, which was probably one of Izuku's parents since she almost never heard their steps from a distance, and definitely not through a wall. She flung open the door and dashed out into the living room, eyes darting around until they landed on Izuku, who was grinning brightly and waving at her, their other hand holding their talking notebook.

"Zuzu!" Himiko rushed to hug them as tightly as she could, and they returned the hug easily, she let out a little squeak of surprise as they nearly lifted her off the ground in their excitement. Her ears picked up a quiet 'aww' from an unfamiliar voice, she glanced towards where it came from and noticed Aizawa standing next to a man with very pretty blonde hair, that must be Izuku's papa, she gave him a little wave before turning her attention back to Izuku.

They practically dragged her over to the spare room, Desmo trotting along happily behind, Himiko glanced back at the adults, but they were all talking amongst themselves, and didn't seem *too* worried about anything she and Izuku could get up to.

They sat down on her mattress, patting the spot next to them for her

to also take a seat. She obliged after opening the curtains and the two of them began chattering about whatever they felt like, Himiko asked them a bunch of questions about their family, now that she was actually getting some proper answers, and they went on long rambles, or rather, wrote essays, about whatever they were studying now. And even though Himiko couldn't even pronounce a few of the words they wrote, she still nodded along, happy to just see her best friend again. Then, while they were writing down another question, she remembered something. Scrambling to her feet and ignoring the curious look Izuku threw her way, she dug through the sections of her school bag and pulled out the bracelet she'd been waiting to give them for days now.

She sat back down on the mattress and held out the bracelet in her palm, "I made you a friendship bracelet!"

Izuku blinked, *'when did you have time for that?'* They asked.

Himiko's smile faltered a bit, "oh, I made it before I, you know, and I was gonna give it to you that day but..."

Izuku's eyes softened and they began to write what looked like an apology, but Himiko just shook her head, "it's fine, really, I'm not that sad about it, well, I'm sad I couldn't give you the bracelet but I'm not really sad about the whole 'murder' thing, Inui explained why but I can't remember exactly what he said." She shrugged it off, "anyways, you want it or not?"

Izuku held out their hand and let Himiko clasp the bracelet around their wrist, it was just a bit too big, 'cause she didn't know what size she had to make it so she figured it would be better to overshoot than make it unwearable. Izuku held up the bracelet to the light, admiring the way the beads all shined just a bit, and the ghost charm was even a little see through! They then waved their hand experimentally, and seemed utterly delighted that the beads, since they were so tightly woven into the string, didn't jangle around at all, and the ghost only made a soft tapping sound. She knew they liked to be sneaky, and she didn't think they'd wear something that made a bunch of noise.

Izuku giggled and wrote down, *'I love it.'* Then, as Himiko spied the half-written question, they quickly completed it, *'how have you been doing, staying here and all?'*

Himiko shrugged, "well, your uncles are really nice to me, and Desmo is the best dog ever," she said, petting the bulldog who had laid down

on her lap, “and I’m really glad I don’t have to stay in a holding cell.” In fact she was starting to feel a little sad that this was only for a week, this was the best she’d ever been treated by anyone who knew about her quirk.

Izuku smiled, *‘that’s nice.’* And then the two of them went back to random nonsense.

Sekijiro couldn’t help but glance over at the door to the spare room every so often, pulling away from the conversation and trying to hear whatever was going on and make sure nothing was getting broken, something that Shouta also seemed to be doing, and that caught the attention of both of their husbands who just started laughing.

“Really Moonlight?” Hizashi asked, trying and failing to muffle his chuckling with his hand, “they’ll be fine on their own for a few more minutes.”

Ryo on the other hand didn’t even attempt to hide his laughter, the bastard even had the nerve to roll his eyes, “has anyone ever told you two that you’re paranoid?”

“Everyone, at every opportunity,” Shouta deadpanned, which made Sekijiro snicker.

“Yeah Ryo, you told me only three days ago, don’t tell me you’ve forgotten?” It smirked, earning a tired look from Ryo.

“Damn it!” Hizashi laughed, “they’re combining their sarcasm, we’ll never win!”

“What, did you two expected anything else from us?” Sekijiro asked rhetorically.

“Yeah yeah shut up,” Ryo’s attempt as harshness was severely undercut by the amusement in his eyes.

“Still,” Shouta began, “I hope the kids are having fun,” he glanced at Sekijiro with a silent question, ‘how’s she doing?’

Sekijiro just blinked and tilted its head a fraction to respond ‘fine, so far.’ Then it shifted its shoulder subtly, ‘the investigation?’

Shouta tilted his head in a way that meant ‘as well as it can be.’ And then, blinking, ‘but there’s a problem.’

Hizashi coughed pointedly, “care to let us in on the conversation or are you two just going to stare at each other for half an hour?”

Sekijiro blinked, nearly having forgotten that it had slipped into the code it and Shouta had made up a few years ago, “right, sorry, we were just talking about how Toga was holding up.”

Ryo hummed, “I think she’s out of the worst bits of the shock, but she’s still being very, *unbothered* about what she did, I think she’s really only scared about going to juvie.”

Sekijiro noticed Shouta frown slightly out of the corner of its eye, “does that have something to do with the problem you mentioned?”

Shouta nodded, “the detectives checked with all of Toga’s relatives, none of them are willing to take her in.”

Hizashi frowned, “that’s news to me, didn’t you say she said her aunt would have her?”

“I think she was lying for, probably a lot of reasons actually, but no, according to the officer that tried to inform her, Toga’s aunt basically told the officer to fuck off and never talk to her again in more or less polite terms.”

“So she didn’t even consider it?” Sekijiro asked, though it couldn’t say it was *that* surprised.

Shouta glanced at it, “she also called her niece a blood-sucking leech, but that’s about it.”

“She fucking *what!?*” Sekijiro heard Ryo growl, quickly translating for the other two, holding back its own bubbling anger.

Shouta nodded sombrely, “so, odds are looking like it’ll be the system for Toga, I don’t like it but unless we can find someone willing to take her in, and, you know, *capable* of taking care of her in the eyes of the law, well...”

The new situation settled in the air like a suffocating blanket, Sekijiro shared a look with Shouta, neither of them were willing to let this kid go through what they did, but what could they even do?

After a while, the kids emerged from the room, with Toga animatedly talking at Izuku, occasionally getting a written answer from them. And the four adults tried to act like nothing was wrong, although Izuku

gave them all an odd glance, nothing really got past that kid, still, they must have figured that it wasn't too important because they just kept listening to Toga with a grin on their face.

About an hour later, Shouta, Hizashi, and Izuku had to leave, and Ryo drew the short straw for having to tell the kids that it was time to say goodbye. While he did that, Sekijiro caught a look from Shouta, who quickly asked him a question in code, 'so, are you...?'

Sekijiro responded hesitantly, 'maybe,' it admitted after a few seconds, 'just maybe.'

Chapter End Notes

> Ahhh, sorry I'm late! I had to get this done last minute. So sorry if this feels off from my usual stuff, I didn't get the chance to do my usual once over!

Chapter 71: I'm staying.

Chapter Summary

Himiko makes a choice.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ryo sat on the edge of the bed, staring in disbelief as his husband paced the length of their room, somehow simultaneously not surprised in the slightest and completely blindsided by this decision, “okay, repeat that one more time, you think *we* should...”

“Ryo, Angel, just listen to me. The kid has nowhere to go, we know this, and she seems to have warmed up to us pretty well,” Sekijiro kept trying to argue its case, “look, all I’m asking is your permission before I bring it up to her. We can *help* her!”

Ryo just sighed, “I’m not saying I’m opposed, but you barely gave me any time to think about it, and are we *sure* we can handle a kid?”

Sekijiro gave him an unimpressed stare, “you’ve been thinking about it plenty these past few days, you’re not subtle.”

“Correction, I am very subtle, you’re just my husband,” Ryo held his head high as if he’d just won some kind of argument. Although, Sekijiro was right, he’d definitely considered the possibility of adopting Toga, or at least taking care of her in some capacity. And this was technically the last day they had to even bring it up to her, given that she was going to be tried tomorrow and most definitely sentenced to stay some amount of time in juvenile detention. And he couldn’t say he hadn’t gotten a little attached to her as well, she was a sweet kid, all the ‘craziness’ was either because of her quirk not being managed properly, or just people clearly being assholes about someone being different from them. Really, after the rules were explained to her, and that one incident with the window, she’d been very well behaved. She was also polite, and plenty talkative, often commenting on whatever came to mind as fast as she could before another observation took its place the next moment. Still, Ryo wasn’t sure she’d be alright with the idea, she was always very jittery around adults is a way she certainly wasn’t with Izuku, even if she was hiding

it better than the first few days.

Through Ryo's quiet musing, Sekijiro had just continued trying a bit too hard to convince him of something that it really shouldn't have had to. "*And!*" It said, Ryo not quite catching what argument this was a continuation of, "we should at least *try* asking her, even if she doesn't want to stay with us, we can help her find someone she *does* want to stay with."

Ryo's ears flicked in amusement, "my dear, you sound an awful lot like you're trying to convince yourself this is a good idea..."

His husband glared at him with a scowl that was only belied by the twitch at the corner of his lips, "okay, maybe I am," it admitted, "but really, do you have a better idea?"

Ryo shook his head, "not really, so, which one of us wants to try talking to her?"

"You, obviously," Sekijiro said, "you're better with kids."

"What on earth do you mean? You're literally a teacher!" Ryo pointed out, holding back laughter.

"Yeah but I teach highschoolers and you've worked with all kinds of ages, so," it trailed off, crossing its arms stubbornly, clearly feeling as if it had made its point.

"Well that's not," Ryo began a rebuttal before realising that they were just going to go in circles, "alright fine, I'll talk to her, *but*," he pointed at Sekijiro, "you have to talk to her after that."

"Well obviously," Sekijiro looked slightly offended at the idea that it wouldn't even try to talk to Toga about this, "I'm just saying you go first."

Ryo rolled his eyes fondly at his husband's antics, "of course Seki."

And then, as he held back a yawn, "but also can we please go to sleep now?" He asked, glancing at his phone which showed it was several minutes past twelve pm.

Sekijiro blinked, as if having completely lost track of how long it had been rambling for, which had begun almost as soon as Ryo had closed the door to their room. "Oh, yeah," it looked apologetic, turning off the lights.

Ryo sighed and closed his eyes, trying to go to sleep, deciding to file all these decisions for when he wasn't tired.

...

"Okay but do you think-"

"Sekijiro, shut up and go to sleep."

Himiko was wondering what on earth was going on, that morning had been the quietest she'd ever experienced while staying here, only Desmo seemed to be making any noise. She wondered if that was because of what was going to happen tomorrow. She didn't feel much like talking either after all, she wasn't staying much longer anyways. But this silence was starting to get on her nerves, especially after she caught the two heroes sharing unsure glances, and she had the gut feeling that whatever they were thinking about had something to do with her.

She wondered in silence, waiting for something to happen, when, as she was watching the birds flying by the window, Inui approached her, looking as energetically friendly as usual. But that demeanour was dropped almost as soon as he began talking, turning into the quieter, softer way he spoke to her about things that seemed to be serious, or difficult for her to understand.

"Toga, me and Sekijiro were wondering if we could talk to you about something important," he said. Himiko didn't realise she'd frozen in place until Inui hurried to reassure her, "oh, it's nothing bad, I promise, we just need to figure some stuff out preferably before tomorrow."

Himiko nodded, allowing Inui to stand next to her as she stared out the window. It was silent for a moment, then he began talking, "so, we contacted all of your relatives that we could find, tried to see if any of them would take you in after you get out of juvie."

Himiko's hand clutched the hem of her sweater, "they said no, didn't they?" She said, voice going small, even though she always knew that was what would happen, nobody who found out about her history had ever wanted anything to do with her, and that was *before* she'd gone and killed her parents.

She couldn't see Inui's expression soften, but she heard it in the way his voice suddenly matched hers in meekness, "well, yes, unfortunately nobody was willing to take care of you, *but*, there are

other options."

"Like what?" Himiko wasn't sure she liked whatever the alternatives to living with a relative were, she'd heard all kinds of horror stories of foster care from some of her classmates, she wasn't sure someone with a quirk like hers would even survive 'till eighteen.

"We could find someone willing to take you in, the paperwork and everything could probably be processed while you're gone, so you have a place to go," Inui went quiet, gauging her reaction to this option.

She frowned, "is, that the only thing?" She asked, really not liking the idea of being handed off to some stranger she'd never met before, there was no telling what she'd have to deal with.

Inui sighed, "or there, well," he paused apparently deciding that he needed to start differently, "Sekijiro and I were talking last night, and, *we'd* be willing to take care of you, if you allowed it."

Himiko finally turned to look at Inui, eyes wide as she almost didn't believe that they were actually offering, but a small nod from Inui confirmed it. She then scanned the room and locked eyes with Kan, who had been silently observing the conversation, it nodded as well, smiling slightly. Himiko looked back and forth rapidly between the two of them for a few more moments, then, she went back to staring out of the window as Kan's voice suddenly joined the conversation.

"You don't have to make a decision now, give it a few hours, hell, make it tomorrow morning if you need that time."

Inui seemed to agree, "it's alright if you don't accept too, just, make sure you're making the choice that makes you comfortable."

Himiko nodded, resolving to think about it, and already not finding the idea nearly as unpleasant as the offered alternatives.

Later that night, she made up her mind. This just wasn't something she was willing to give up.

She announced her decision after dinner, "I want to stay here." She said firmly, with so much confidence that she even shocked herself by how much she meant it.

The two heroes looked both shocked and delighted, although Inui was doing a much better job of concealing his expression. "Are you sure?"

Kan asked, staring at her with an inspecting gaze, as if trying to spot the slightest bit of hesitation. But it wouldn't find any, because as soon as it had said that, the rest of her apprehension had suddenly fled, smothered by that impulse to stick to her decision now that she was being challenged on it.

"I'm sure! I'm completely, totally, a hundred percent sure!" Himiko said, raising her voice slightly and sitting taller in her chair, as if that would make her case more convincing. This had been one of the best weeks of her life, because despite being cooped up in this apartment the entire time, it didn't *feel* like she was a prisoner, really the whole thing felt like the heroes were only trapping her inside because they were supposed to.

Inui huffed out a half laugh, amused, "alright then, that seems to be *very* sure indeed miss Toga," he looked at Kan for a moment communicating something silently.

Kan sighed, grinning just a bit, "so you're completely alright with everything? I mean, if we take you in, you'll be seeing a whole bunch of the rest of this family, and you've never really met any of them except Izuku."

"Zuzu told me enough," Himiko insisted, grabbing onto the sleeve of Inui's shirt to make him listen to her, "I don't want to go somewhere with someone I don't know, and you're nice, *I want to stay*."

"Alright, alright, we were just making sure" Inui gently removed her hand from his shirt and gave her a headpat, "welcome to the family, Toga."

Chapter End Notes

> This is one of my shorter chapters, but I mean, I *did* warn you guys this might happen.

Chapter 72: The sun, the light, and their shadow.

Chapter Summary

Izuku helps out some interesting people.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku was bored. The kind of bored that was never a good sign for just about anyone within a hundred metre radius, least of all themself. And in a closed space like U.A, there were very few people who could find themself outside that radius. They had tried to do various things to stave off the boredom, talking to people, leaving cryptic messages, using one of the empty gyms for training, but nothing was working. They'd already written full essays on the quirks of the new batch of first years, from *all* the courses. And now they had nothing to do except lounge around and bother their unsuspecting family members. They decided to avoid Uncle Sekijiro and Uncle Ryo though, those two had enough to worry about with their work, and especially since Toga had been in juvie, not to mention the extra paperwork. Izuku wasn't sure if their shenanigans would be met with annoyance or strained interest, but either way they didn't want to cause even *more* trouble for the pair.

That only meant that they had to pick some different targets, they'd probably end up being a bit annoying, but they knew their limits. And they most certainly knew how to make sure they weren't disrupting any classes or other such stuff. So it was off to find some easy mischief for them.

They waved to Aunt Kazumi, who was the only other person in the teacher's lounge at the moment, to let her know where they were going. She looked up from some papers and tipped her hat in acknowledgement before going back to going over whatever training exercise she was planning that would have her students complaining for the next week. Izuku slid behind their desk, opening up the vent access and slipping in silently, shutting the panel behind them as they made their way to the places they knew wouldn't be *too* busy. First they tried the classrooms that had just finished their classes, no

students appeared to have stayed back to chat with friends. Then they tried a few common hangout spots, wondering if some dumbass was trying to skip a class or two altogether, nope, none of the first years this time were willing to risk the wrath of their teachers. Izuku was slightly surprised they hadn't found at least one of the business course students around today, Uncle Ken was probably the *most* lenient when it came to tardiness. Well, lenient was a relative term when compared to the rest of their family, but still.

They then checked the infirmary, not to look for trouble, anyone who'd landed in there would have had enough of that already, but just to see if any first years had been silly enough to get hurt. It hadn't happened yet, and with it being just over a month into the school year, Izuku was starting to wonder if this had been some kind miracle group of students. They'd expected at least the hero course to get an injury by now, scrapes and bruises were inevitable after all. Well, there was still a long while to go, and teenagers were dumb.

Izuku frowned to themself, could they say that anymore? They'd officially turned thirteen a few weeks ago, so maybe they couldn't criticize these kids too harshly, on the other hand, they weren't really attempting to exclude themself from the category of 'reckless teenagers' since they knew all too well that they had no right to make such a claim. They shook their head, whatever, that didn't matter much, they needed to find somebody to bother or a problem to solve before they lost their mind from utter boredom.

They resumed their search, passing over a few occupied classrooms, noting that each of the teachers seemed to notice whenever they passed by, momentarily glancing up at the vents when the students weren't looking. They could almost say they missed when most of their family couldn't predict them well enough to not be surprised by them dropping by unannounced, but they also kind of liked that the people they cared about *knew* them like that.

They ended up wandering about long enough that the first-year heroics classes had time to wrap up and send a flood of forty very rowdy students through the halls. Izuku eyed the groups for any sign of interesting information or an entertaining scene. It was difficult to pick out individual people through the general noise of students now free to talk and hang out with friends. Izuku smiled as they heard a few people complain a bit about an upcoming joint training, although they were sure nobody would dare bring it up in class. It always amazed them how Dad and Uncle Sekijiro could fool their students into thinking they were scary, when really, Izuku knew they both had

major soft spots for kids, how that wasn't obvious to everyone who ever met them was a mystery nobody had been able to solve yet.

Izuku sighed quietly and decided to shuffle along a bit faster, confident that the extra noise would be lost among all the chatter. They kept an eye out for anything interesting, there were a few kids sharing notes, friends talking, and one girl who seemed to be far more frazzled than anybody reasonably should be given the situation. Izuku frowned, if they remembered correctly, and they certainly did, she was in class 1-A, with an energy quirk, and a noted tendency to push other students away. They decided to keep an eye on her, if there was something wrong then their dad would have noticed already, but if this was a sudden thing, Izuku wanted to make sure nothing bad happened.

After a moment, one of the 1-B students came running up to her, Izuku remembered him, he had to have a costume made in the first week due to the nature of his quirk. The boy walked up to the frazzled looking girl, waving an enthusiastic hello which was quickly returned, though far more distractedly.

"There you are! Where's..."

The boy looked around in confusion, seemingly expecting someone else as well.

The girl shook her head, "I don't know, they bolted that way as soon as class was over, and sensei wanted to talk to me about my grades, so I couldn't go after them! Oh when I get my hands on those bullies!!" She stomped her foot, clearly agitated by what must have been an altercation. Izuku frowned, their dad would never stand for bullying, so how on earth did this slip by? Either way, they knew they could do something to help the mystery student.

They knew that Nedzu probably had eyes on the teen already, but, based on the current schedules, there probably wasn't anyone available to look for them. At least, nobody who could catch up as fast as Izuku. They waved to one of the cameras in the vents, signing their intentions just in case Nedzu was watching, then they made their way in the direction the girl had indicated, making sure to look around as best they could for any extra clues. They knew of a few good places to hide on this floor, and there was no way that the student had made it to the ground floor without running into a teacher to help them.

Luckily for them, they quickly noticed that the door to the boys'

locker room was slightly ajar, which it most certainly hadn't been when they were wandering around earlier. They crawled into the vent that led to the locker rooms, holding back a sneeze at the thin layer of dust coating the inside. They peered in, seeing someone curled up on one of the benches, hiding their face with their hands as they muttered something to themself. There weren't any access points in here, so they'd have to drop from the wall, but that could startle the teen, oh well, that was a risk they'd have to take.

Izuku used their pocketknife to unscrew the grate and tried to figure out how to put it down gently, managing to stretch out and place the grate gently on top of one of the lockers. They then jumped down with a soft thud, which was enough to make the mystery student snap their head up, terror slowly morphing to bewilderment.

Izuku gave them a wave, pulling out their notebook and almost greeting the boy by name, now that they recognized him from his file, before remembering that most people found a stranger knowing their real name to be unnerving.

Instead they wrote, *'hello, I'm Izuku!'*.

The boy still didn't seem all too keen on talking, so Izuku continued, *'I saw your friends looking for you and thought I'd try to find you for them.'*

Well, at least that got a reaction, although shame wasn't the ideal response. "I-I'm Amajiki Tamaki," he muttered, "can you please leave me alone? Mirio and Nejire will find me soon enough." Okay, at least their friends knew where to look.

Izuku tilted their head, fine then, but they wanted to know about something else too, *'I heard one of your friends mention bullies?'*

Amajiki tensed, "it's really just two idiots," they muttered.

They then looked at Izuku very carefully, "uh, aren't you a bit young to be here?" He asked.

Izuku frowned, shaking their head and refusing to elaborate. Instead, beginning to ask a few more basic questions and maybe fish out enough info to find the bullies, when the door creaked open, revealing the other two students, Hado Nejire and Togata Mirio.

"Um, Tamaki," Hado began, "who's that?"

"I dunno. This is apparently Izuku, and…" Amajiki trailed off, "uh,

how should I address you?"

Izuku smiled, *'they, what about you?'* They asked, even though they technically knew already from the student files, it was just polite.

Somehow, the question just made Amajiki curl up even further, muttering something like "I don't want to be here..."

Izuku winced, automatically writing a quick apology to him, when Togata interrupted him, "Come on Tamaki!" He said with a bit too much brightness, "I don't think they're gonna bite!" He joked, then, winking at Izuku, "well, I'd take the lead but unfortunately me and Nejire are on default settings," he laughed at his own joke. Sometimes Izuku wondered if having an odd sense of humour was a blonde thing, given they could have heard this same joke from Papa, or Keigo, or, well, not Uncle Ryo, but he'd definitely make it if he could.

Amajiki sighed wearily, staring at Togata for a good few seconds before relenting, saying in the quietest voice possible, "I go by he, or they, whatever you feel like." Izuku wondered if this was a major case of social anxiety or if he just didn't like people.

Izuku tried to distract from the awkward situation they'd unwittingly put poor Amajiki in, writing a question about the cause of this mess, *'so, about those bullies.'* Hado had seemed rather fired up about them, so maybe she'd be more willing to spill.

And as expected, Hado's eyes lit up "oh, those assholes!" She exclaimed, "they were picking on Tamaki because he's shy!"

Izuku nodded, waving a hand to prompt Hado to elaborate, she sighed, "they tried to embarrass him in front of everyone they did! I stopped them though!"

Izuku raised an eyebrow, but Hado just shook her head, "I didn't fight them if that's what you're thinking, I wasn't *that* angry, but I yelled at them in the middle of class."

"So, um, didn't you tell your teacher?" Togata asked, apparently he hadn't heard this story yet.

Hado huffed, "have you *seen* Aizawa sensei? I think he'd just tell me not to start a fight and cause him trouble!" Izuku frowned, they had assumed this was already getting fixed, but maybe not.

They reached out a hand to Amajiki, wo stared at it for a moment,

“uh, what?” He asked.

They just huffed, and beckoned the three students to follow them, checking that the coast was clear before darting through the hallways. They didn’t bother looking back, hearing three sets of footsteps right behind them. They made their way through the halls, now empty after the students had filed into their next classes. With heroics classes for the second years starting up in about half an hour, they didn’t have much time. So they picked up the pace and led the students towards the teacher’s lounge.

As soon as Amajiki saw where they had stopped, he froze. Hado hesitated as well, with Togata standing in front of the two protectively, “um, buddy, are you sure this is a good idea?” He asked.

Izuku nodded sharply, knocking on the door, the three cringed a bit at the noise. Amajiki took a step back, but Izuku grabbed his wrist before he could get anywhere as the door opened and Aunt Nemuri looked out into the hallway, eyes locking on the group of kids and something akin to worry crossing her features, likely due to Izuku’s presence.

“Oh, hello, is there something you dears need help with?” She asked, holding the door open for the four to enter.

Only Izuku didn’t hesitate, they frowned and waved the others over, as Aunt Nemuri smiled, “come on, no need to be shy, whatever it is I’m sure we can help.”

Togata was the first one to step forward, holding the other two’s hands in his own and pulling them slightly towards the room. Hado clenched her jaw and followed, with Amajiki being the most reluctant, muttering under his breath that he didn’t want any trouble.

Izuku figured that was good enough and quickly turned their attention to the other two teachers in the room, quickly running up to the desks and signing a greeting.

Dad and Uncle Sekijiro looked up from grading papers, sharing a look as they probably debated who was going to handle this. Izuku sorted that out for them, nodding at their dad, if the problem was in 1-A, there was no need to get Uncle Sekijiro involved as well.

“Is something wrong?” Dad asked eventually, glancing at Hado.

Izuku shook their head and gestured to Amajiki, who shrank under the attention, Izuku pitied him, really, but they knew they couldn’t allow

any form of bullying to continue. “They were getting bullied by two of the other 1-A students.”

They saw the moment their dad’s expression hardened, causing all three of his students to freeze up, seeing the issue, he sighed and forced his face to relax, “bullies, huh?” He said, although Izuku could hear the underlying anger in his tone, “you three mind telling me what happened?”

Hado coughed nervously, “um, well, some jerks tried to drag Tamaki in front of the classroom, and make him say some personal stuff, ‘cause they knew it would make him panic, they stopped a little bit before you showed up.” She stared down at her feet, expecting to not be believed, and Izuku understood exactly how she felt, a few years ago they would have done the same thing.

“What are their names?” Dad asked with some gentleness in his tone.

“Um, I don’t remember exactly, this is the first time they’ve tried this, but, it’s the two boys in the front row,” Hado admitted.

Dad frowned, “I see, I’ll sort this out.” Izuku smiled at that, knowing exactly what was coming to those jerks.

Amajiki sighed, “yeah yeah, you’ll give them detention or whatever, can we go now?”

Izuku could see the gears turning in their dad’s head as he recognized the slight bitterness in Amajiki’s tone, “no, me and most of your other teachers have a three strike policy with bullying, first offense gets detention and a trip to the school counsellor, they do it again and they’re suspended, a third time and they’re expelled.” As strict as that sounded, Izuku had only ever seen two kids expelled, most stopped when they realised their actions had actual consequences, and a few just needed to talk to Uncle Ryo.

Uncle Sekijiro chimed in with a mumbled, “hopefully it doesn’t get that far.”

Izuku took their chance to slip back into the vents without any of the students noticing, watching from a distance now that their dad had everything under control.

The students slowly managed to be convinced that the teachers actually *would* do something, and were eventually dismissed to go and attend their next class, with a note from Dad to excuse any tardiness.

Before they left, Togata seemed to realise something, “wait, who exactly was that Izuku kid? They can’t be a student here.”

The three adults exchanged a knowing look, Uncle Sekijiro grinned, “I have a suspicion you’ll have plenty of time to find that out on your own.”

Chapter End Notes

Here comes the big three!!

Anyways, about our little vampire, she'll be in the next chapter, I just needed to skip over her time in juvie. So don't worry anyone who might have been looking forward to seeing her. (**cough* Kai *cough**.)

Chapter 73: Little Pup

Chapter Summary

Himiko comes home \^v^/

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Himiko could barely stand still as she waited for the adults to finish filling out the paperwork to let her out of this miserable place. It had been a *long* few months, but she was finally free!! Juvenile detention was every bit as awful and horrible as she'd ever imagined, the other kids hated her, the adults didn't really care what happened to any of them, and they were mostly stuck in this grey brick of a building. At least she wasn't *always* alone. There was this one girl who'd showed up for a week, she was only supposed to be there for two days, but then she tried to beat up all the meanies that picked on Himiko and got yelled at by the adults for it, she'd said it was fine though, since she was used to fighting her siblings' bullies. And besides that, her new fathers, she still couldn't believe she got to call them that, visited as often as they could, making sure she was alright, or, as alright as someone in her situation could be.

She glanced up when she heard the conversation die down, her parents having finally gotten everything in order, her pa waving for her to come along as the two of them headed outside. She practically jogged up to them, having to walk just a bit faster than normal to keep pace. She gladly breathed in the fresh air, which wasn't really that different from the air in the centre's yard, but it smelled like freedom, so she thought it was much nicer.

The apartment was nearby enough that they could just take the bus, sometimes Himiko caught someone staring at her weirdly, and she worried that, *somehow*, they knew what she'd done. That shouldn't really have scared her, she had already been punished for her crimes, both murdering her parents, as well as the other attacks. But every time she saw someone looking, she quietly shifted closer to one of her parents, it helped that both of them were scary enough at first glance that people just kind of avoided the three of them altogether. It made her a bit annoyed though, the glares her parents were getting from the other passengers. *They've done nothing wrong!* She wanted to yell, but she was just a kid, and not the super skilled kind like Izuku, she

couldn't stop this, not now, and maybe not ever. So instead she kept quiet until she was standing outside the door to the apartment, patiently waiting for it to be unlocked.

She heard Desmo's barking as soon as the door opened, she rushed inside to greet the bulldog, who seemed overjoyed when she recognized Himiko, licking at her face and trying to climb into her arms. Himiko giggled, "hi Desmo!!! I missed you!!"

She heard quiet laughter from behind her as she gave Desmo all the attention she deserved, before finally looking around the apartment. It didn't look like anything had changed, still the same dark green walls, still the same well-loved look to everything inside, and the only things that had moved were the books and pencils. She stared intently, carefully combing through every little detail she could remember to make sure this was the same as when she'd left.

She heard a quiet woof as her dad caught her attention, waving a hand at the door to the spare room, she blinked, slightly confused for a moment, before walking up to the door and holding the handle. She glanced back, and Dad nodded, she pushed open the door to the room, expecting to see the same clutter that had been there the last time she'd been in here.

Instead what greeted her was much different, she stared, first registering that the walls were painted her favourite shade of pink, before noting the bed tucked in the corner, and the small cupboard next to it. Again, she glanced back at her parents, still mildly in disbelief, they both just smiled encouragingly. She stepped inside, first opening the cupboard and finding a mix a few new clothes, as well as everything from her old wardrobe that wasn't painfully dull, which wasn't much, but she would have been sad if she couldn't wear them again, even just glancing over the whole thing, it was so much more colourful than what she was used to! She then turned to the bed, eyes widening and sparkling with joy as she noticed the teddy bear leaning against the pillow, she'd only once mentioned that she'd always wanted a teddy bear, but she never expected she'd actually get one! She picked it up gingerly before noticing the other plushie hidden next to it, a cute little bat, she giggled, that was probably Pa's idea, she held that one as well, they were *adorable*.

She laid them both very carefully on the bed, making sure they were comfortable before turning around and sprinting out into the living room and tackling her dad with a big grin on her face. He laughed and picked her up, spinning her around before he hugged her tightly, a

hug which she returned as best she could. She felt another arm wrap around her and she glanced to her side just long enough to smile at her pa as it joined the hug, giving her a grin in return as it ruffled her hair.

“I take it you like your room?” It asked jokingly.

“Mhm! It’s so cute!” Himiko exclaimed, it was so much nicer than her old room, yeah maybe her old room was a bit bigger, and had fancier things, but it wasn’t *nice*. It was cold, with its bed that always seemed like it was made for an adult, and its off-white walls that were the same colour as the rest of the house, and the carpet which seemed way too expensive for a kid’s room. This room that was covered in all her favourite colours and things? *This* was nice. This was *warm*.

She wriggled out of the hug, landing on the floor a bit clumsily as she took several steps back and slowly spun in a circle, properly taking in the whole place, not as some random apartment, but as her new home.

She felt tears trail down her face as she realised, *actually* realised, what all this meant for her, obviously she’d understood before, but, well she supposed she hadn’t *really* thought about it much beyond ‘oh I have a new family.’

“You alright pup?” She heard Dad ask, ears turned towards her curiously, he looked somewhere between concerned and understanding.

She nodded, smiling as she hastily wiped the tears, “yeah, I’m alright. Actually, I’m better than alright! *Way* better! I,” she sniffled, “I’m so so *so* happy!” She could barely put into words the sheer joy she felt from just being here, in this apartment, which was now her home, with these two people, who were now her parents. Parents who wouldn’t get mad at her for being weird, or try to stop her from using her quirk, who cared way more about her than about whatever anyone else thought of them raising someone like her.

Desmo nudged her side and she giggled, “yeah! I’m happy Desmo! Are you happy? I get to see you every day!” She said, gleefully smushing the bulldog’s face as hard as she dared without hurting her, finding the way her wrinkled face scrunched up even more to be both cute and funny. She stood up and did a few more spins around the room, simply unable to contain her delight.

Pa chuckled at her sudden burst of energy, “careful Himiko! You

might trip!" It called, even though she was far too giddy to even think about being careful.

Eventually she tired herself out and settled down, it was a weekend, so her parents didn't have any work, not even hero work, and even if they did she thought that they might have taken the day off. But that meant she had their whole attention for the entire day, and she was going to make the most of it. She didn't feel much like going anywhere outside though, so she ended up figuring out that she liked just existing in the same room as her parents while the three of them did whatever. She occasionally piped up with a question about this or that, which they were very happy to answer.

Eventually, she found herself yawning and barely able to keep her eyes open, she wasn't sure why, she didn't *think* she'd done anything exhausting today. She stood up from the floor, closing the book she was reading to Desmo and, too tired to go to her room, she sat on the couch next to her pa while it drew something. She tried to get a look, it seemed like some kind of bird, but she quickly just gave up and closed her eyes, leaning against it and trying to sleep.

She felt someone pick her up and carry her somewhere, although she was far too tired to open her eyes and check who it was, they placed her on something soft, her bed? She immediately tried to snuggle into the soft thing. And just as she drifted off, she could have sworn someone ran a hand through her hair and whispered, "sleep well pup."

Chapter End Notes

> Again, sorry for the shorter chapter, we *should* be back to normal next week when exam season ends.
>
> Anyways.
>
> Baby bats are called pups.
>
> Have fun with that!

Chapter 74: A shockingly easy introduction.

Chapter Summary

Himiko meets one of her cousins

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Himiko scanned the unfamiliar pair in front of her, half of her was tempted to hide behind her pa, but, well at least she could say hi, these were people that belonged to their new family after all. One of Izuku's uncles was currently talking with her dad, he was her uncle as well now she supposed, while his brother, her and Izuku's cousin, seemed more interested in what the grownups were talking about than pestering her.

It had been sheer coincidence that the Iida brothers had run into the three of them while they were out for ice-cream, but Himiko's parents had figured that now was as good a time as any to introduce Himiko to Iida Tenya. She glanced once again at the boy in question, who was frowning at something the adults were saying, well, if he wasn't going to say anything, maybe she should. Besides, she didn't think the older Iida and her dad would be done talking any time soon, she wondered how long it would take for Pa to get annoyed and try to drag Dad away, probably a while if this was someone it actually liked.

Himiko cleared her throat quietly, waving at the younger Iida, "hi?" She tried, a little unsure of how to proceed when he just looked at her blankly.

They stared at each other for a long moment, before he got closer to her, "hello." He said, stiffly holding out a hand.

Well, at least Himiko had enough experience with unreasonably stuck-up kids to know how to do a proper handshake. She grabbed his hand and shook it up and down a few times, just enough to be polite without making it weird. He seemed satisfied by this, "my name is Iida Tenya, you must be Toga Himiko-"

Himiko coughed and interrupted him, "*Kan* Himiko actually," she'd taken her dad's family name too, but she just used the two interchangeably, it really depended on whatever was more convenient.

“My apologies, Kan Himiko, although I don’t think that’ll be much of an issue, since we’re cousins, I can just call you Himiko,” he said confidently, before realising that he probably shouldn’t have just assumed that and added on a muttered “right?” At the end.

“Well, then I’ll call you Tenya!” Himiko chirped brightly, a bit amused by how awkward this kid seemed to be, wasn’t he used to this kind of stuff? Being a legacy kid and all since, according to Izuku, that involved a lot of socializing with people you didn’t know! Heck, even *she* knew how to take this interaction now that she knew he was the overly polite type.

Tenya nodded, “that would only be fair,” he said, looking back at the two adults who were *still* talking, “hm, I think we shall have enough time to walk a bit while your father and my brother speak.” Himiko had to force herself to hold back a giggle, it was rude to laugh at the way other people spoke, but really, when Izuku said their cousin was all prim and proper, she didn’t think he was *this* prim and proper. He either politely ignored her reaction or simply didn’t notice as he called back to her pa, “Uncle Sekijiro! Can I show her the lake?” Oh, Himiko did recall Dad saying something about a big lake nearby.

Pa tilted its head in their direction, “don’t go too far, don’t go off the path, don’t do anything stupid, and call Tensei if something happens.”

Tenya nodded and headed down a side path, holding Himiko’s hand to make sure she followed. Himiko frowned, “um, won’t we be out of yelling distance?” She asked, remembering one of the rules her parents had given her for when they were outside like this.

Tenya shook his head, “no, well, we *will* be a bit too far to yell, but the rule is make sure the adults can reach us in a minute or less.”

“That’s not what *I* was told, and besides, how will they know we’re in trouble if we can’t yell?”

Tenya reached in his pocket and pulled out a basic flip phone, “I have my brother’s number as the first one I can dial, I can inform him, and therefore your parents, if we get into some kind of trouble, and this is also a public park, so we have a little more leeway than we otherwise would.”

Himiko blinked, “huh, you have a phone?”

Tenya shrugged, and somehow even *that* looked unnaturally stiff, “well, after the incident with the teleportation quirk, our family

thought that me, Izuku, and Shoto should have *some* way to contact people we know."

Himiko raised an eyebrow but didn't say anything since she thought it might be a long story, and a little boring if Tenya told it, instead she mentally filed that away under 'things to ask Izuku about' and hurried to keep pace with Tenya. The path they were going down was well maintained, with dense trees lining one end and the other just being open to the rest of the park, but the grass and the occasional bush that dotted the side was more wild than what she was used to, clearly pruned occasionally, but nowhere *near* the level of neatness in her old neighbourhood.

They quickly got to the edge of the lake, which had previously been hidden from view by the aforementioned row of trees, Himiko's eyes widened, it wasn't all that big of a lake, perhaps just barely too big to be a pond, but it was *pretty*. The midday sun making the water sparkle where it reflected just right, and the water itself was a deep greenish-blue towards the centre. There were a few birds in the water, but she couldn't tell what kind they were from this distance. Tenya stopped before they got too close to the edge of the lake, sitting on the grass and glancing over at her before nodding at the spot next to him.

Himiko paused before sitting down as well, criss-crossing her legs and leaning slightly backwards, "this is nice," she said, smiling.

Tenya nodded, before laughing quietly as his eyes trailed over the shore, "you know, Izuku once tried to grab an odd fish that swam too close to that ledge," he said offhandedly, gesturing at the edge of the lake where a small cliff, only about half a metre tall, led to what seemed to be a deeper part of the lake.

"And did they get it?" Himiko asked, tearing her eyes away from the water.

"Well, I think I'd describe it more like the fish got them, they slipped and ended up falling in, and that spot is deep enough to drown a child, it gave both their fathers such a scare that they forgot Izuku can swim rather well," Tenya smiled, eyes gazing off to the distance as he thought about the incident.

Himiko giggled, trying to picture Izuku's shocked expression as they fell, "huh, I didn't think Izuku was *that* reckless."

Tenya gave her a disbelieving side-eye, "firstly, this was over two years ago, secondly, what exactly did they do when you first met

them?"

"Um, well they found me draining a rat, and then got really close to my face to look at my fangs, and then they started asking questions about my quirk, why?" Himiko asked, wondering where this was going.

"So they found a strange person eating a rat, and knowing them they figured out that you were responsible for the various attacks in the area, and the first thing they did was try to analyse said stranger's quirk..."

Himiko paused, huh, that *did* make what Izuku did sound really, *really* stupid. And, now that she thought about it, what kind of not reckless person becomes a vigilante, especially that young? And based on a few other stories, some of which Izuku had refused to tell her more than the basics of on account of it 'not being their tale to tell,' it sounded like they kind of just helped anyone, even if said person had tried to kill them. Again, she desperately wanted to know how the heck you end up becoming siblings with someone who used to regularly threaten to burn you to a crisp.

They sat in silence a bit longer until Tenya checked his phone and stood up, "ah, it appears the conversation is finally over, shall we head back?"

Himiko nodded, and then as an afterthought, "um, before we go, can I ask you something?" She said before she could stop herself.

Tenya didn't say anything, but turned to look at her anyways.

"Um, could, I have some of your blood?" She asked sheepishly, deciding that, since her track record on this question had been rather good with this family, she might as well try.

Tenya seemed to mentally bluescreen at that, "I- I beg your pardon?" He asked, adjusting his glasses as if that would help him hear her request better,

"Can I have some blood? You know, cause I like you!" Himiko was starting to feel a bit silly now, having to explain everything.

"Ah, I see," Tenya held out an arm, "if you could, take it from here please," he said, pointing to a place on the inner part of his elbow right at a tiny dot. And then, after a moment of silence he must have taken as confusion, he hastily explained, "it's, whenever I have to get

blood drawn for tests, that's the vein they use, so it won't hurt as much if you do it there."

Himiko smiled sharply, "oh, sorry I just wasn't expecting you to agree that quick," she muttered as she bit down where he'd indicated, relishing in the way her fangs pierced skin, she tried to keep the cuts small so that it wouldn't be *too* obvious.

Tenya hummed, "I've seen weirder ways of showing affection."

Himiko blinked as she pulled back, happy with the few drops of blood she'd managed to lap up, "um, what?" She really couldn't think of anything weirder than drinking blood but at this point she was starting to understand that anything was possible in this family.

Tenya shrugged and began explaining as they walked back, "well, Izuku would tell you exactly how they'd kill you," ah, right, Himiko remembered that rather sobering revelation well, "Bibi Higari would give you some random weapon xe made, Keigo would drop either a shiny thing or a dead mouse on your head, and Uncle Sekijiro and Uncle Shouta would challenge you to a fight."

"You mean fight as in sparring?" Himiko asked, only to be startled when Tenya burst into laughter.

"No, I mean fight as in somebody will leave with a bruise and a busted lip, don't worry, they only do that if they think you stand a chance at winning."

Himiko quietly wondered why anyone in their right mind would accept that offer, before remembering that Izuku, Dad, and now Tenya, had willingly offered her their blood, *none* of these people were 'in their right mind.' "I guess blood drinking really *isn't* the weirdest possible way to say I want to be friends."

The two of them quickly returned to their respective grownups and said goodbye, Tenya gave Himiko a small hug as he and his brother left, to which her dad said, "well, I guess you two got along nicely, that kid doesn't just give out hugs like that."

Himiko shrugged, "well, I got some blood, so I guess it makes sense we're on hugging terms."

Pa laughed, "of course you did," it shook its head, "I bet Tenya wasn't even that disturbed by it."

“Nope!” Himiko grinned, “by the way, hey dad, did pa ever try to fight you?”

Dad laughed, “did Tenya tell you about that habit of Seki’s? Oh boy let me tell you it was the most confused I’d ever been.” He continued telling the story, with some interjections from Pa, and Himiko smiled, it seemed that her kind of weirdness had managed to fit right into this group of weird people.

Chapter End Notes

> At this point, Tenya knows it's better to just roll with whatever insanity goes on around him.
>
> Fun fact: the thing about drawing blood from a specific place over and over making it kind of numb is true actually, source? Personal experience. (Even the spot Tenya points to is the same as the one on my arm.)

Chapter 75: More introductions!

Chapter Summary

A tour of the city begins with meeting some more people.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was a nice day, a great day even, it was one of those days where the clouds were grey and heavy with rain, the cool breeze and the complete lack of sun meant there was a sharp chill in the air, and you didn't have to do anything except whatever you wanted to do. And yet, Touya couldn't enjoy the weather that normally meant he'd go out for a walk around the city without a destination in mind now, no, now he had an annoying roommate who didn't do well at all in cold weather. He grumbled as he tried to push Keigo's wings out of his face as the bastard just unhelpfully cuddled closer. Eventually, Touya sighed, leaned back against the couch, and accepted his fate as a human radiator.

And then his phone started ringing and Touya groaned as he felt a headache start to form, "Hey! Birdie!" He shoved at Keigo, unsuccessfully trying to push him off, "oi! Keigo! Move you dumb bitch!" He tried to reach for his phone, but the table was too far away.

Keigo just clung tighter, mumbling "oh screw you Ashes, I'm cold."

"Would you just let me answer that call! I *know* you can hear it!" Touya tried once again to reach for the phone, which had stopped ringing and started again, clearly this person was being persistent, although from this angle he couldn't quite make out the caller ID.

Keigo muttered something that was probably a complaint as he shifted to the side, letting Touya finally grab his phone, he checked the name at the top of the screen which read 'pest (affectionate)' and grumbled. He answered the call "what do you want you fucking gremlin?" He tried to sound annoyed, but there was no hope of that when he was grinning like the cheshire cat, knowing that whatever was about to happen was either going to be very fun or give him a heart attack, or more likely both.

“Hey Tou! Are you busy?” Izuku’s voice was nonchalant, but Touya could hear the buzzing excitement underneath that tone, he wouldn’t be surprised if they were bouncing on their heels while they spoke.

Touya glanced at the clingy bird sprawled on top of him, “uh, technically no, but I might have some trouble *doing* anything for a while.”

Izuku giggled, “let me guess, Kei is giving you a hard time about the weather?”

Keigo craned his neck to speak into the phone “hey Izuku!”

“Hi! Can you let Touya go for a while?” They asked. Touya eventually gave up and put the call on speaker so that Keigo would stop trying to push his head out of the way.

“What do you need him for?” Keigo replied, a coy smile on his face.

“Well, I was going to show Himi some spots around the city, but our parents are all busy, and we need an adult to go with us.” Touya took a moment to remember the newest addition to the family, Keigo would probably have dragged him to meet her if they weren’t busy with rescues due the recent flooding in Esuha.

And Keigo seemed excited at the chance as one of his wings smacked Touya in the face, “hey! Watch where you flap those things Birdie!”

“Oops,” Keigo looked completely unrepentant, sticking his tongue out at Touya before speaking again with Izuku, “where do you want us to meet you?”

“I’ll head to the rooftop of this building,” Izuku said, with some shuffling noises in the background that suggested they were already making their way up, “then we’ll head to Himiko’s place and get her.”

Keigo nodded and stood up, grabbing his jacket and rushing outside while Touya told Izuku they were on their way, hanging up before jumping through the window and landing in Keigo’s arms.

They got quite a few sidelong glances as they walked to the meeting spot, understandable since, compared to the normal people wearing cardigans and sweaters, they made quite the odd pair, with Keigo wearing a jacket clearly meant for winter and not a chilly spring day, and Touya casually strolling through the cold in a t-shirt and ripped jeans. When they got to the apartment Keigo carried Touya as he flew

up to the rooftop level, grinning when he saw Izuku waving at them and running over.

“There you are!” They exclaimed, “come on! Let’s go get Himiko!” They began dashing off as if they meant to go across the rooftops, but Touya quickly grabbed them by the jumper, and despite their attempts to wriggle out, Touya had gotten used to their tricks, so he didn’t let them slip.

He laughed at their pouting face as he handed them over to Keigo to fly down to the street, “sorry ‘Zuku, we’re doing things the normal way today.”

As the three of them made their way down the street, Touya held both Izuku and Keigo’s hands, with both of them here he wasn’t certain what kind of shiny curiosity would drag their attention and get them lost. And when they got to the apartment, Izuku quickly scampered up to one of the windowsills, Touya couldn’t tell exactly what they signed, but soon enough another child’s head poked out from the window Izuku then led them down to where Keigo and Touya were waiting. Touya finally got a proper look at his new cousin, she seemed like a bubbly kid, given the way she literally skipped over to them, her hair was done up in buns in a way that made him certain she’d done those herself, and she had a wide smile on her face as she waved at them.

“Hi! I’m Himiko!” She said, “you must be Zuzu’s brother and his friend!” Touya glanced over at Izuku, who just groaned and glared at him, they were the spitting image of their dad when they did that now, too bad for them that Touya was already used to the real thing.

“Oh shut up!” Izuku scowled at Touya’s barely held back laughter, he held up his hands placatingly, but filed that nickname away for teasing purposes later, after all, what kind of big brother would he be if he didn’t annoy his siblings a little bit?

Keigo waved a wing at Himiko “hello! I’m Keigo, and the one with the bad attitude is Touya,” he yelped when he got shoved for that last comment, although Touya couldn’t keep the scowl on his face for long when he heard his friend’s churring laugh.

Himiko grinned at the display, giggling as well. Suddenly, Keigo gasped, his eyes lighting up in a way that made it obvious he’d seem something that interested him, “you have *fangs*,” he whispered, crouching down to her level.

Himiko looked a bit unsettled by the remark, “uh, yeah?” She said, now seeming rather nervous,

Keigo quickly realised his error, “no no no, I meant like, fangs are cool, and it’s always nice to meet someone else with fangs, other than your parents that is.”

“Someone *else*?” Himiko asked, grin growing wider when she put two and two together.

“Mhm!” Keigo said showing off his own fangs with some amount of pride, from what he could see, Touya thought that Keigo’s fangs might be slightly shorter, but Himiko was still happy judging by the squeal she let out, and Touya could practically see the sparkles in her eyes. Oh fucking hell, she was acting her age, and Touya had exactly zero experience with normal, not concerningly mature, teenagers, he was going to need some help dealing with all this. He quickly sent a text to Fuyumi, asking if she could help babysit these gremlins, sure she was a teaching assistant to *elementary* students, but that was more experience than he had, and he knew she was free because it was the weekend.

Fuyumi responded firstly that she was annoyed at him for not telling her sooner that he was hanging out with the new kid, and secondly that she’d help on the condition that she could bring Natsuo with her to meet Himiko, apparently Shoto had homework to do and had to stay at home. Touya looked over to where Himiko and Keigo appeared to be getting along like a house on fire, “hey kid, you wanna meet my sister and brother?”

Himiko nodded rapidly, “sure!”

Touya sent Fuyumi the confirmation, and also a location to meet them at, “alright, let’s head to the café, the one with the really good sandwiches,” he said as he began walking, hearing three sets of footsteps behind him. He occasionally looked back to check on Himiko, who smiled at him every time she saw him glance at her. She was adorable, and she seemed way too naïve to be hanging around people like them, then Touya shook his head, reminding himself that whatever her personality was, he couldn’t tell what she could or couldn’t do. After all, people always said Pops was naïve given his personality, and that was an outright lie, a lie that he was all too happy to fuel, but a lie nonetheless.

Himiko skipped up to him, “um, are you a hero?” She asked.

Touya nodded, “yeah, and so is Birdie over there, why?”

She shrugged, “just asking, I mean, everyone in this family seems to be a hero, so I figured I’d check.”

Touya hummed, “well, not *everyone,* Fuyumi’s training to be a teacher, and Natsuo just started his medical degree.”

“Are those the people we’re meeting?” Himiko asked, to which Touya nodded, not saying much else since he knew his siblings would want to introduce themselves properly

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Himiko didn’t know exactly where they were going, but soon enough they started slowing, she looked around and spotted a café, presumably the one that they were going to meet Touya’s siblings at. Touya whistled when he spotted two people sitting at one of the outside tables, waving at them when they looked up, Himiko blinked, those two looked almost nothing like Touya, the only reason she could spot any resemblance at all was because she was searching for it.

The lady walked up to the group, hugging Touya before turning to Himiko, “hello, I’m Fuyumi, and you must be Himiko.”

Himiko nodded, bowing politely, “yep, that’s me! It’s nice to meet you miss!”

“Aw, you’re such a polite young lady, now where did you learn that, because I *know* it wasn’t from any of us,” Fuyumi laughed at her own joke, and Himiko giggled as well, from what she understood that was an entirely reasonable assumption, although, Himiko didn’t much like thinking about the people who *did* teach her those manners.

The boy, she assumed that was Natsuo, muttered something as he stood up, grabbing a cane from where it leaned against the chair, “we get it Yumi, we’re all so uncivilised, you don’t have to tell the new kid that!” His tone sounded almost like whining. Himiko’s eyes sharpened when she noticed that he had a noticeable limp, favouring his right leg. Well, she supposed that explained the cane. Although she did want to ask if something had happened, the same way she was curious about the gnarled patches of faded red scars that covered parts of Touya’s face and arms, she kept quiet in case she accidentally dragged up sore topics.

Natsuo must have noticed her staring because he smiled, “you wanna know how my leg got fucked up, right?”

Himiko nodded sheepishly, and he took that as the sign to keep talking, “I actually got shot in the knee during a fight these three were in,” he pointed at the two heroes and Izuku, “turns out the bullet managed to knock a chunk off my patella, and properly lodged itself in my tibia, which made it super annoying to get out, and to clean up the shards of bone.”

Fuyumi sighed, “Natsu,” she began, with the tone of someone who’s had to make this point many, *many* times, “not everyone has memorised a human’s anatomy, could you say it simpler for her?”

Himiko shook her head, “no! I understood what he said!” She loved biology, it was one of her best subjects, and she was always fascinated by how the human body worked. She looked at Natsuo, “so, did it cut any tendons? And did you have to get one of those metal rod things put into your bones?”

Natsuo seemed surprised at the onslaught of questions, but then he quickly matched her enthusiasm, “oh, no, I’m lucky it didn’t go through the quadriceps tendon, that would have been a disaster, and thanks to RG’s healing quirk, I didn’t need a intramedullary rod to keep everything in place, we couldn’t fix my patella though, the piece that got taken out was completely shattered, just a bunch of bone fragments.”

“So, hypothetically, if I cut that tendon, you wouldn’t be able to walk at all, or would you have been able to fix it, those are near blood vessels right, would you bleed out?” Himiko vaguely hear Touya mutter something to Fuyumi about med students and serial killers, but she was curious, Natsuo clearly knew a lot about the human body and she wasn’t going to let this chance go by.

“Well, yes, hypothetically someone who had their quadriceps tendon severed wouldn’t be able to move their lower leg much, so it would be very hard for them to walk or run, and as far as I know, it’s a very difficult thing to fix if it’s done a certain way, as for the blood vessel thing, it really depends on if you manage to hit the popliteal artery or not, but yes, given enough time someone *could* bleed out from a stab to the knee.”

“*Okay!*” Fuyumi suddenly interrupted with an exclamation that was a bit too loud, “let’s maybe not teach the kid how to do crimes,” she glanced at Natsuo pointedly.

Natsuo rolled his eyes, “fine, fine,” he then smiled a bit, looking at

her, “hey Himiko?” He gestured at Izuku, “they can give you my number, if you wanted to know more medical stuff.”

Fuyumi sighed while Izuku nodded rapidly already bringing out their phone, Touya coughed and reminded them that the whole point of this was to show Himiko some cool places around the city, and Keigo nodded, using his wings to herd the lot of them away from the café.

Himiko ended up learning a lot of things about her new city, like the fact that some of the alleyways led into smaller alleyways, perfect for hiding according to Touya, and Natsuo and Fuyumi pointed out all the best places to get food, and Keigo showed her how to spot cameras and their blind spots, and Izuku showed her how to tell if a ledge of any kind could support her weight or not. Okay, maybe only one of those things was normal for a tour of a city, but she was having *fun* so did it really matter if what she was learning was slightly questionable?

At some point it looked like it was about to rain, not to mention that Keigo had to carry Natsuo since he was having trouble keeping up, so unfortunately the walk was ended there. Himiko pouted about it until Touya promised he’d take her around again whenever he wasn’t busy. She grinned sharply and said she’d hold him to that promise as the group split up to go their separate ways, Keigo went with Fuyumi and Natsuo, and Touya took the two kids back home, Izuku was greeted by Shadow and Mop, and Himiko by Desmo. She spent the next hour telling the bulldog everything she’d done, as well as looking at the new contact in her phone, the fourth one so far, and she knew there were many more to come.

Chapter End Notes

> Maybe I'm making my plans for Himiko a bit too obvious, but hey, that's part of the fun!

Chapter 76: Bandages and bloody noses.

Chapter Summary

Izuku and Himiko sneak into U.A, and help out a shy student.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku was completely, utterly, one hundred percent sure this plan would work. They had been stuck at home for the past *three* days because of a stupid sprained ankle, but now they could manage to walk so surely they could at least go to U.A, but *no*, their parents insisted on them staying in bed for another two days. Well, Izuku wasn't having it, they weren't planning on going on patrol, they were going to *school*, so they really weren't putting themself in any danger. As soon as their parents left for work, they carefully climbed out of their window and onto the fire escape, begrudgingly taking the stairs down to the street level, they might be confident about walking to the school, but they weren't stupid enough to try parkouring with a leg injury, at least not anymore.

They managed to slip into the crowds, hiding their limp with a practiced ease that they hadn't had to use in a long time outside of fights. Their jaw clenched as unbidden memories rose to the surface of their mind, bloodstained hallways and classrooms no longer coloured with shame and fear, but rather with anger at the injustices committed under the care of those who were meant to guide. They didn't know why they were thinking about this all of a sudden, most of those nightmares had stopped ages ago, now it was usually about someone they cared about dying or having to leave them. Or in one miserable instance, their biological parents showing up to take them away from their family. They remembered having to sleep in their parents' room that night, with a protective embrace and murmured reassurances that if those bastards ever tried something like that, they'd have to put up a *damn good fight*.

Izuku shook their head, clearing their thoughts and forcing themself to focus on the noises around them, whispers in the crowds, vehicles driving past, the occasional dog barking, something metal falling to

the ground. They sighed, maybe they should talk to Uncle Ryo later, they were starting to wander down memory lane a bit too frequently for their liking.

While they continued down the road, and eventually decided it would be smarter to take the bus, they heard their phone ringing in their pocket. They flipped it open, sincerely hoping that it wouldn't be their parents calling to check on them, there was no possible way they'd be able to lie to either one, and they didn't want to make their dad have to ditch his class to drag them back home. Luckily for them, it was Himiko! They grinned and answered the call.

"Hi Zuzu!!" Himiko exclaimed her voice going much higher pitched than normal in all her excitement.

"Hi Himi!!" Izuku returned the greeting with the exact same energy, happy to talk to their cousin again. Himiko didn't respond for a second, and Izuku frowned, "Himiko?"

She giggled, "sorry, sorry, I'm still not used to hearing your voice, it startled me."

Izuku had to stifle their laughter at that, "oops," they said, grinning. Then, another thought occurred to them, "aren't you in class right now?" They asked. After a couple of weeks, Himiko had been fully caught up on all the learning she missed out on while she was in juvie, now she was attending a nearby middle school and, unlike Izuku, she had a class schedule to follow.

"Nope! School's out for the day thanks to a villain attack a couple buildings over, too bad though, we were gonna do a pop quiz on basic quirk sciences, and I was looking forward to showing off what you taught me," Izuku could almost *hear* the pouty expression on her face, "now I have to wait until *tomorrow* to tell my classmates about how amazing and smart my cousin is!"

Izuku rolled their eyes fondly, "aww, Himi, you would have been fine without my help too! It's not like you're stupid or anything!"

Himiko huffed, "yeah, but you're a *genius*, so there."

"Alright alright, I get it," Izuku laughed quietly, "are you going home now?"

Himiko hummed in confirmation, "I'm about to go catch the bus, too bad Desmo's at the vet, the apartment's going to be awfully quiet

without her *or* dad and pa."

Izuku's eyes brightened for a moment, "hey Himiko, you think you could catch a bus going to the stop near U.A?"

"Yeah, why?" She asked, sounding rather excited at the prospect of some Izuku style mischief.

"I'm on my way there now, home was getting boring, so if you want to meet me at the bus stop and then we can go get Nedzu to let us in without our parents finding out..." They trailed off, letting her fill in the blanks.

"I'm in, meet you there!" Himiko said, cutting the call.

Izuku smiled to themself, waiting at the stop until another few buses pulled up, and eventually Himiko hopped off of one, they whistled and waved to her when she looked over. She grinned and practically tackled them, pulling back suddenly when they yelped in pain. She looked them over, sniffing the air as if she could hope to smell any blood, but Izuku shook their head.

"It's just a sprained ankle Himi, I'm fine."

Himiko looked at them incredulously, "*just* a sprained ankle? Izuku shouldn't you be at home!?"

Izuku groaned quietly, "oh not you too! I've *been* cooped up at home! I want to do something, and the safest thing is hanging out at U.A!""And you can still walk?" Himiko asked, seeming rather curious now.

"Yeah, being a vigilante made me really good at moving while injured." Well, that wasn't the main reason, but they'd never seen any reason to bring their past up to Himiko beyond just 'my parents kicked me out and people were quirkist assholes to me.' After all, it just seemed so long ago, what was the point when they had everything they had ever wanted here and now?

Himiko seemed ready to argue, but then seemed to remember that if Izuku went home, then she'd have to go home and be bored to death too, so she relented, "fine, but if you twist that ankle more I'm telling gran."

"Yes ma'am!" Izuku said, silently shuddering at the threat, it wasn't actually a threat, but the idea of disappointing Granny Chiyo was still

awful enough to have the desired effect.

The pair walked to U.A, chattering about whatever random nonsense they could think of, Himiko told Izuku how her new teachers were so much nicer than her old ones, and that she'd even made friends with some of her classmates! And she was allowed to carry a blood packet in her bag just in case her quirk started acting up, and nobody would complain about it being disgusting or creepy! Izuku smiled, knowing exactly what she was feeling, it was the same thing they'd felt when they got taken in by their parents, at the time their mentors, and it was probably one of the most wonderful feelings in the world, to be accepted.

When they got to the main gate, Himiko stepped forwards, but Izuku grabbed her hand, leading her around the back of the building to a smaller door, about three feet tall, which *just* barely big enough that both of them could reasonably squeeze into it. Izuku waved their hand in front of the motion sensor, catching Nedzu's attention, and after a moment, the door swung open and the two kids crawled inside, finding themselves in the dense forest area of the school grounds.

"Cool!" Himiko's eyes were practically shining, "Nedzu has his own secret door!"

Izuku laughed, "yeah, it's really neat, and he lets me use it sometimes for stealth purposes."

"You mean mischief purposes," Himiko said, smiling knowingly at them.

"Maybe, maybe not," Izuku said with a wink.

They led Himiko towards the main building, nobody would really be around there since the hero course was training in Ground Beta, the support course would be in the labs, and the other two courses would mind their own damn business.

Izuku had made a habit of waving at the hidden cameras whenever they could without giving away their locations to others, just a fun little inside joke between them and Nedzu. So whenever Himiko wasn't looking they'd glance at a camera and give a quick salute before she could see. At some point, Himiko asked if Nedzu wouldn't say anything about them going around like this, but Izuku assured her that he found this just as hilarious as they did.

Izuku even stopped by the empty hero course classrooms, talking

about some of the more interesting students or any unusual chaos. When they stopped by the 1A classroom, Himiko suddenly froze, sniffing the air, Izuku watched her for a moment before realising she was smelling blood. They immediately went on high alert, eyes darting around for any sign of a fight or...

Himiko's gaze was locked on the door, Izuku frowned, "Himi?"

"Someone's been hurt, nobody I recognize, but they went out that way."

So one of the students was injured, "maybe they were sent out to gran's office?" Izuku said as Himiko continued sniffing around outside the door.

"Is it on the ground floor?" She asked, still being unfamiliar with the layout of the school.

Izuku shook their head, now following Himiko as they raced downstairs, not caring all that much about their busted ankle, "no, but I know dad wouldn't have allowed an injured student to participate in training, so they can't be at Ground Beta either."

Himiko nodded, following the scent trail like a bloodhound on a mission. Meanwhile, Izuku sent a text to Nedzu to keep an eye out for any injured students wandering around. They got a quick reply informing them that Uncle Ryo and Granny Chiyo had also been notified along with the two available teachers, and a student had been left behind when the hero course went to Ground Beta. That confirmed what Izuku suspected, and gave them a decent idea of where the student was headed.

But oddly enough, Himiko began leading them deeper into the forest part of the grounds, which unfortunately had no cameras, though Izuku was certain Nedzu would have done it if it wasn't a bit unnecessary *and* a logistical nightmare. Soon, Izuku picked up the sound of someone talking to themself, and they ran into a clearing, to see a rather familiar person standing around, just leaning their face against a tree for some reason. *Are you kidding me!?* They thought, *this poor guy again?*

They whispered something to Himiko, who nodded and waved, "hello, um, Amajiki?" She called, startling the kid into turning around, and now Izuku could see the blood dripping down their nose and onto a handkerchief.

“W-who, wait, um, you’re that kid from the beginning of the year, aren’t you?” They said, gesturing a shaky hand at Izuku.

Himiko gasped, “oh, you’ve met Izuku?”

Izuku nodded, “you were still in juvie at the time, I helped them and their friends get rid of some bullies.”

“Cool!” Himiko exclaimed, then she caught another whiff of the blood and turned to Amajiki with a frown, “shouldn’t you be in the nurse’s office?” She asked.

“It’s not that bad,” Amajiki mumbled, “besides, Aizawa-sensei just had me sit out training, he didn’t say anything about the nurse’s office.” Izuku frowned, that was weird.

“Nope! You’re coming to the nurse’s office with us!” Himiko said, beckoning them away along with Izuku.

Amajiki sighed, “I don’t have a choice, do I?”

“Only if you’ll get help either way!” Himiko said at the same time as Izuku shrugged and whispered something to her, she nodded, “they say you have some friends who’ll help you?”

“Um, no thanks, I’ll go to Recovery Girl’s office,” Amajiki said a bit too quickly, and Izuku wondered whether something had happened, it couldn’t have, the last time they saw those three they were all hanging out in the corner of the cafeteria.

They shook their head and led the other two back towards the main building, Himiko perked up when they stared reaching the edge of the forest, and Izuku smiled, hearing a familiar loping gait crunching through the grass.

They heard a tired sigh as Uncle Ryo bounded up to them, “why am I not surprised?” He muttered, before turning to Amajiki, “come on Amajiki, let’s get you to RG.”

Now that there was an adult in the conversation, Amajiki seemed to shrink where they stood. Himiko and Izuku shared a look with Uncle Ryo, who backed away a little bit and let the kids walk between him and Amajiki.

Himiko hummed as she skipped along, occasionally looking behind her to check that Amajiki was still following the three of them to the

nurse's office, where Granny Chiyo was lecturing a student who'd somehow ended up with a cut on their arm, from what Himiko could hear, it was a business course student who got too close to the support projects without proper safety gear. She doubted Bibi Higari would be too happy about that, considering xe was always talking about lab safety.

As soon as the student left Granny Chiyo turned to the three newcomers, "ah, what do we have here?" She asked, walking up to Amajiki, "come now child, take a seat," she pointed her cane at one of the beds. Amajiki obliged, putting down the handkerchief they'd been holding to their nose. Himiko looked around, spotting a box of tissues and putting it next to them.

"Now what happened?" Granny Chiyo asked.

"Um, I, don't know," Amajiki said, although their voice got quieter as they spoke.

Granny Chiyo frowned, glancing over the student for a moment before taking a thermometer from her desk and handing it to Amajiki, "keep that in your mouth until it beeps," she said firmly while riffling through some of the medicines she kept in her desk drawers.

They nodded, slightly confused, waiting until the thermometer beeped and took it out, Granny Chiyo stepped over to read it, but Himiko beat her to it, "that's a thirty-eight point seven? Yikes," she cringed sympathetically, "I got a fever like that once, it was awful." Although she did wonder how that resulted in a nosebleed of all things.

Granny Chiyo nodded, "indeed, you should be resting, not at school," she said, taking the thermometer and wiping it with what Himiko assumed was disinfectant before putting it back on her desk, "I can give you something to keep the fever down for now, but you need to go home."

Amajiki sighed, the sound a bit muffled by the tissue in their nose, "I understand."

Granny Chiyo huffed "finally, a sensible teenager," before handing Amajiki a small tablet but before they could take it, Himiko had already rummaged through her backpack and taken out her water bottle, holding it up to them.

"Here, it sucks taking medicine without water, especially when you have a fever," she clarified, feeling a bit awkward.

Granny Chiyo gave Himiko a small cup, “let’s not get you sick as well dearie,” she said.

Himiko giggled in embarrassment glancing over at her dad who just huffed amusedly, “oh, right, my bad,” she poured some water into the cup and gave it to Amajiki who took it gratefully, taking the medicine.

Just about then, the door burst open and two other students barged inside, followed by Pa and Uncle Shouta, who looked both concerned and very, *very* tired, Himiko glanced at the clock and realised that it was time for all the students to be going home. One of the pair, a girl with hair like spirals, and Himiko really wanted to know how she did that, walked up to Amajiki, “Tamaki! What happened!?”

The boy student, Himiko couldn’t tell exactly why, but something about his eyes kept throwing her off, also approached, but both were blocked by Granny Chiyo’s cane, “sorry children, your friend has a fever and I’m not taking chances on if whatever they’ve got is contagious or not.”

The spiral girl gasped, still not backing away, “I thought you said you were just *tired*!?”

Himiko saw Uncle Shouta frown, “Hado, please listen to RG.”

Her pa nodded, putting a hand on the weird boy’s shoulder, “that goes for you too Togata.”

Both students seemed reluctant, but backed off under their teachers’ orders, Uncle Shouta then looked at Amajiki and frowned, “why did you even come to class? You must have known you were sick, you were practically falling asleep at your desk, you should have stayed at home.” Himiko knew it wasn’t meant accusatorily, but she knew that Amajiki might still take it that way.

And as predicted, they seemed to wilt under their teacher’s harsh gaze, mumbling something that only Himiko and her dad picked up on, *“but then I’d prove them right.”*

“Prove who right?” Himiko blurted out suddenly, earning a small glare from her dad, *oops*.

Suddenly Togata’s eyes lit up, then he frowned sadly, “Sprout, is this about what those kids said yesterday?”

“What kids?” Uncle Shouta asked, looking like he was about to go

expel someone.

“No!” Amajiki said quickly, “none of our classmates, I promise, just, they’re just some kids around our neighbourhood, don’t worry about it, it’s not your concern.”

That didn’t sound like something not to be worried about, at least not to Himiko, and it seemed her pa agreed, “if it’s making you show up to class sick, it *is* our concern actually.”

Uncle Shouta nodded, “not only are you putting yourself in harm’s way, if you’re contagious you’d be putting your entire class in danger,” Himiko thought that was a bit harsh, but it certainly seemed to work.

Amajiki looked down at their hands, “right, I’m s-sorry.”

Dad glanced pointedly over at Uncle Shouta, who sighed, “I’m not mad at you kid, I’m concerned, I don’t want my students training themselves to death because they felt like they had to.”

Amajiki looked like they didn’t expect that, “oh, right…”

Pa cleared its throat, “look, if any of you kids run into trouble, don’t hesitate to tell me or Eraser, we will *always* do everything we can to help.”

The three students nodded gratefully, and Amajiki was led out by their friends, who were talking about getting them to rest.

As soon as they were gone, Granny Chiyo and Uncle Shouta’s eyes snapped to Izuku, who realised they were in *big* trouble.

“Um, I can explain?” They said sheepishly.

Granny Chiyo huffed “listen here you little troublemaker, you were supposed to be at home, *resting*.” She then shepherded Izuku onto the bed, taking off the bandage and cloth and checking their ankle for more damage.

“I wasn’t doing anything extreme! I was very careful!” Izuku whined.

“How many times have I told you kid,” Uncle Shouta said, pinching the bridge of his nose, “you need to rest!”

Granny Chiyo chuckled, “I suppose they take after their parents in that regard,” she said, eyes sharp, “I remember you and Hizashi sneaking

out of the infirmary so many times I had to get your friend to block the door with clouds."

Uncle Shouta laughed at the reminder, "yeah, I suppose they do take after us a bit too much," but Himiko could have sworn his eyes were sadder now, she shook her head, turning to her own parents, who looked, well, they clearly weren't happy to see her here.

"Aren't you supposed to be at home pup?" Dad asked, a slightly disappointed look in his eyes that Himiko did not like in the slightest.

"Well, um, Izuku called, and I thought I'd tag along with them, it's not like Desmo is home alone either!" She said, puffing out her cheeks and stomping her foot.

While they were arguing, Granny Chiyo appeared to be having some trouble with Izuku, who kept moving their leg on reflex every time she tried to examine the sprain, "can one of you hold them still for me?" She asked.

The three adults all opened their mouths to offer, but Himiko was faster, she liked being helpful! "I've got it!" She said, holding Izuku's leg as still as she could, which was still enough to check the state it was in.

"Well, I suppose I'll say this much, you haven't damaged it too badly," Granny Chiyo said finally, "but it's definitely swollen, so you'll have to wear the bandage a little longer."

Izuku pouted but didn't say anything, knowing that this was entirely their own fault.

Himiko looked curiously at Granny Chiyo as she began to reapply the bandage. "Can I help?" Himiko suddenly said, surprising even herself with the question.

Granny Chiyo paused for a moment, and then, "alright, but you have to be very careful, and do *exactly*, what I say."

Himiko nodded rapidly and took the rolled up end of the bandage, beginning to wind it around Izuku's ankle, it was a weird bandage, it was kind of stretchy, and Granny Chiyo had to make sure Himiko was pulling it at the correct tension, otherwise it would be too tight or loose. Himiko wrapped the bandage up and around and under according to the very specific way Granny Chiyo instructed, and finally hooked the two clasps at the end of the bandage into itself to

secure it.

Granny Chiyo did a quick check over Himiko's work, and nodded, "well done! Oh if only I had an assistant as helpful as you to help me wrangle these reckless children!" She laughed to herself.

But Himiko's eyes lit up, "could I? Be your assistant I mean?"

Granny Chiyo looked over at Himiko's parents, who just shrugged. "If it doesn't mess with her studies, I don't see why she couldn't come help you when she has free time," her dad said, and her pa nodded in agreement.

"Alright then," Granny Chiyo said, putting her hand on Himiko's shoulder, "you've got a lot to learn if you're going to help out around here, are you ready to put in the work?"

Himiko squealed in joy, "yes, yes absolutely!" She puffed out her chest and stood as tall as she could "nurse's assistant Inui Himiko, reporting for duty!"

She heard several people laugh good-naturedly at her antics, and she couldn't help but break out into giggles as well, mentally promising to work as hard as she could to be able to help her grandma, and the other kids, as best as she could.

Chapter End Notes

> So I'm a day late, oops, but in my defence, college is fucking killing me and this was almost four thousand words.
>
> Either way, have a vampire nurse!
>
> I adore nurse!Himiko AUs so much you have no idea, so of course I had to make her RG's assistant!
>
> Also yeah, fevers can absolutely make you more susceptible to getting nose bleeds, source: my eleven year old self who freaked out when xyr nose started pouring blood out of nowhere, and it turned out I had gotten a fever so bad that it dried out the lining of my nose and made it crack and bleed.
>
> Also fyi, because apparently there are people who don't know this, the bandage I'm referring to is a compression bandage, also called elastic bandages, they're used on sprains/other joint injuries to restrict movement and reduce swelling. (As a writer,

being a doctor's child has more benefits than one might initially think.)

Anyways, don't worry about Tamaki, those assholes are going to get a Nejire flavoured ass kicking off-screen.

Chapter 77: Karma is a.... feral child??

Chapter Summary

A certain purple boi enters the story.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Middle school was awful, the worst of the lot, everyone was so much meaner and the teachers no longer gave a fuck about 'being gentle with the child.' No, as far as all those bastards were concerned, anyone with an undesirable quirk was a piece of garbage and deserved to rot in hell. It didn't help that the stupid *muzzle* strapped to Hitoshi's face was getting more uncomfortable by the second, but he couldn't take it off, not unless he wanted to land himself in detention for the day. He supposed he should count his lucky stars, this muzzle wasn't designed to cut into his face, like the ones other schools had put on him, but it kept his mouth shut in such an annoying way. He could feel his jaw beginning to cramp up and knew he'd have to practice speaking before he went home or his dad would be worried out of his mind when Hitoshi couldn't form proper sentences. It didn't help that the other kids kept trying to goad him into fights, ones which he really, *really* shouldn't be allowing himself to be dragged into, but goddamn it, they were all annoying little shits and one of these days he was going to win and teach them a lesson. Or maybe not, considering that would just get him expelled, and then Dad would have to find a new school, and maybe they'd have to move again and...

He took a deep breath, holding his head high as he walked down the hallways, doing his best to ignore the jeers thrown his way as he made his way to his next class. Surprisingly, history was one of his favourite classes, second only to English, and today they'd be learning about the history of the hero system, or, more accurately, the more advanced version of the history everyone was taught in elementary school.

He took his seat at the very back of the class, best not to draw attention to himself, at least this way nobody could see the glares he threw at nearly everyone who dared to piss him off. The lesson itself was fairly interesting, going through the history of how governments

around the world fought to control vigilante activities ‘to keep the peace,’ Hitoshi was sure that wasn’t the real motivation, but he wasn’t about to bring that up.

At some point the teacher asked the class what their favourite hero was, Hitoshi heard a *lot* of people go for the top three, All Might, Best Jeanist, and Edgeshot, a few went for Mirko, one of the few female pros who was reaching a high ranking. Hitoshi heard two or three of the boys say Midnight, and while Hitoshi certainly admired her for her kindness, confidence, and outspoken advocacy for women and other marginalised groups, he doubted that any of that was why those boys had picked her. There were some others mentioned, Gang Orca, the Wild Wild Pussycats, a few that Hitoshi couldn’t be bothered to listen to because honestly, did any of these kids care about anything other than power?

Eventually it was his turn, and he knew he couldn’t answer that question honestly, not unless he wanted to be laughed at for being even weirder than people already thought he was. His favourite hero was one that he knew next to nothing about, not even their name, or quirk, or anything other than what seemed to be their weapon, that grey scarf thing, but that didn’t matter to Hitoshi, he would always hold a special admiration for the hero who saved his life in more ways than one. Maybe it was stupid to get so hung up on someone that he’d only ever met once, someone who probably didn’t even remember him, someone not even the internet seemed to be able to find anything about. But Hitoshi was nothing if not stubborn, and one day he *would* find that hero, maybe even thank them for everything they’d inadvertently helped him with.

He realised the class was staring at him, waiting for an answer, so he thought for a moment before deciding to go with his second favourite hero, “Present Mic.”

He heard some of the kids who knew JSL snicker about that choice, he knew what they were probably thinking, that Present Mic was a showy ditz of a hero, and yeah, he kind of was, but Hitoshi also knew that he did a whole bunch of charity work, and used his radio show to spread positive messages and bring attention to people’s stories. He didn’t bother with trying to explain all that, since only the teacher and a few students would understand, and even then they probably wouldn’t bother looking in his direction long enough to try. Instead he tried to focus on the lesson, dutifully taking notes and trying his best to ignore the meaningless chatter from the other kids, he was already going to get in trouble for just existing, he’d rather not have to get in

trouble for failing his classes was well.

At some point however, he just started staring at the clock on the wall, silently begging for time to move faster, this was the last class of the day and he just wanted to go home, and get this damn muzzle off his face. He watched as the seconds ticked by, going tick, tock, tick, tock, until finally the shrill screech of the bell marked his freedom for the day. He didn't bother listening to whatever goodbye the teacher was saying to the students, it wasn't directed at him anyways, and he made a beeline for the door, stopping by his locker to put the muzzle back, or he might be accused of stealing.

As soon as his mouth was free, he noticed the other students began staying as far away from him as they could, they didn't have to worry though, his jaw was aching too much to even *try* asking a question.

He made sure to get out of the school grounds as quickly as possible, barely stopping himself from looking like a fool by running away from the gates. He ducked into the nearest alleyway, opening and closing his mouth a few times as he felt his jaw pop and his muscles scream in protest from being used so forcefully after being kept still all day. He took a few deep breaths before attempting to speak properly.

"H-hello." Well, that wasn't good, he would have to practice a bit more, which just meant saying whatever random phrase came to mind, until his voice stopped wobbling, or at least until he could reasonably pass it off as him just being tired.

As he kept talking, he suddenly heard footsteps rapidly approach the alleyway he was in and he sighed, knowing exactly which of the clowns had decided to follow him all the way out here. He turned and spotted a trio of students two girls and a boy, the most irritating bunch of mosquitoes in the whole school if you asked Hitoshi. He sneered at them.

"H-hey Furuguchi," He said, knowing he was pissing off the ringleader of this circus.

The smaller of the two girls scowled, "it's *Hara*guchi, you villain bastard, remember it."

"Oh, s-sorry," Hitoshi said without an ounce of remorse, "I just d-don't bother remembering the n-names of idiots."

Haraguchi scowled and gestured for the other two, Asano and Kanemaru, to do something. Hitoshi's sneer turned pretty quickly into

a snarl when he saw what Kanemaru was holding, the muzzle, they must have taken it from his locker and ran after him. He tried to dodge away from Asano, but she was far stronger than him, and he was backed into a tight alleyway with nowhere to run, he flinched as she grabbed his arm and held him still. Kanemaru approached, holding the muzzle, and Hitoshi kicked and struggled, knowing exactly what they were planning on doing, it didn't take a genius to figure out why the boy with the quirk that put locks on things was the one with the muzzle.

Hitoshi tried his best, "why a-are you doing t-this?" He asked, but none of the three were stupid enough to answer. He spat at Kanemaru, but that didn't stop him from fitting the muzzle over Hitoshi's mouth.

The only thing Hitoshi could do now was scream curses at the three, the sounds muffled by the muzzle and eventually turned to intelligible noises when it clicked in place, shutting his jaw tight, and Hitoshi knew that the other boy had locked it tight, since his other hand was now holding a key. Hitoshi would have to cut the straps of the muzzle, but that would mean having to go home and explain to his dad what had happened, and he didn't want his dad to worry like that, especially since that would mean having to move and uproot his entire life all over again just because he couldn't beat a bunch of bullies.

Hitoshi didn't know when he'd started crying, but he felt tears trail down his cheeks and heard the three idiots laughing at him, he blinked rapidly, trying to force the tears to stay in his eyes, he *refused* to show any weakness in front of these assholes.

As soon as Asano let him go, he attempted to grab at Kanemaru, but that didn't work out as he just tripped over his own feet and fell to the asphalt. The laughter just got worse, and now they'd started jeering at him, saying things that he was doing his best to block out as he got to his knees.

He closed his eyes for a moment, but then, he heard the laughter stop as a scream of pain echoed through the alleyway. Hitoshi opened his eyes to see someone standing in front of him and Kanemaru stumbling backwards, nursing a split lip. He looked up at the newcomer, they looked to be about Hitoshi's age, maybe a bit younger, wearing casual clothes and looking like the kind of person that those three would chew up and spit out. But then there was the look on their face, the universal look that screamed *'I* dare *you to try something.'*

Haraguchi scowled, “and who the hell are you supposed to be pipsqueak?”

“Nobody you know,” the kid signed, “just someone who doesn’t let people get hurt.”

Asano, the only one of the three who knew JSL, laughed, “oh you think you’re some kind of hero? Well then you should be helping us!”

Kanemaru nodded, “yeah, we’re doing everyone a favour by shutting up that *villain*”

The kid scowled, “not happening.” Hitoshi barely caught the moment they lunged forward, kneeing Asano in the gut before fluidly stepping into a punch at Haraguchi’s face. The three bullies were completely caught off guard, and could do nothing as the new kid leapt around between them like a feral animal, punching and kicking until they were crying and begging for mercy. Something about the whole situation sparked a feeling of deja-vu.

The kid paid no attention to the whining, instead turning to Hitoshi with the sweetest, most doe-eyed look on their face, as if they *hadn’t* just mopped the floor with three people bigger than them, “are you alright?”

Hitoshi nodded hesitantly, half-wondering if this was even a child at all and not some kind of demon, and whether or not he was next on the chopping block. He scrambled to his feet and leaned against the wall, eyeing the kid suspiciously as they glanced at the muzzle, “can you get that off on your own?”

“No,” Hitoshi signed before gesturing at Kanemaru, “he has a key that’ll unlock it.”

The kid nodded sharply before going over to the boy who was curled up on the ground, kicking him again to get him to drop the key, they then handed it to Hitoshi who, after a couple of tries, managed to unlock the muzzle and threw it to the ground. He’d probably get in trouble for making the school lose that stupid thing later, but right now he couldn’t care less.

He then realised that the kid hadn’t moved an inch from where they were standing, and he was starting to feel more unnerved than he already was, “um, h-hi?” He silently cursed the way his tongue stumbled over the words, surely showing weakness in front of someone who just kicked the asses of Hitoshi’s worst bullies was

asking for trouble.

“Hello?” The kid signed back, seemingly equally unsure about what they were supposed to be saying, then, ”do those guys bother you a lot?”

Hitoshi wasn’t entirely sure what prompted him to answer, but he blurted out “oh, n-no, well, yes, but I c-can handle them!”

The kid stared for a moment before turning back to the muzzle, “what did they do that for? Based on what they said earlier, I’m guessing you have a voice quirk?”

Hitoshi clenched his jaw, not willing to answer that, after all, there was no telling what his rescuer would do if they found out they’d helped a ‘villain.’ But the kid just sighed and pointed to their shoes, “you don’t *have* to tell me, but I get it.”

Hitoshi stared at the shoes for an embarrassingly long time, the shape and colour stirring something in the very back of his mind, until it finally clicked. “Y-you’re-” he began, barely stopping himself from finishing that sentence, he considered himself pretty knowledgable on most ‘undesirable’ quirk groups, but he’d only given a passing glance to the quirkless population, he didn’t even know there were still quirkless people under the age of fifty.

The kid nodded, before looking down at the bullies, kicking Haraguchi one last time and beckoning for Hitoshi to follow them out of the alleyway, and he was all too happy to oblige, he didn’t want to be anywhere near here when those three got over the pain. He should say that it was horrifying to see them be utterly pummelled like that, but really, he only felt a kind of sick satisfaction at their misery as he followed the kid out to the road and away from the alleyway.

After a short walk, the kid stopped, “can you get home okay?”

Hitoshi nodded, “yeah,” he said, smiling a bit when he realised he was speaking mostly normally again, “I’ll be fine,” he was telling the truth, but he also didn’t really want a complete stranger to know where he lived. And then, as an afterthought, “I haven’t seen you around before, and I try to keep track of everyone,” he said, making sure he didn’t put any questioning inflection in his voice, they wouldn’t know not to answer if he did, but it wasn’t good to break the habit.

The kid shrugged, ”I’ve lived in this area for a while now, maybe you just haven’t noticed.”

Something about that rankled with Hitoshi, but Musutafu was a big place, it was entirely possible that this kid had slipped by him. So instead he said, “you could have just kept walking, instead of intervening I mean.”

“They were being assholes and you needed help.”

Hitoshi stared at the kid, waiting for them to elaborate, but they didn’t, staring at him earnestly until he realised that, yeah, it really was *that* simple for them. He chuckled, surprising even himself with how real it sounded, “you’re a weird kid.”

The kid giggled, “yeah, I get that a lot.” They glanced up at the sky for a moment, “I should probably let you get home now, someone’s probably waiting for you, right?”

Hitoshi glanced at his phone, startling at the time, “oh shit, yeah, my dad’s going to be worried sick if I’m any later.” He wanted to slap himself for giving away that much information, but he’d somehow dropped his guard. He glanced at the kid, finding himself compelled by something in his mind to be polite to them, “thanks for the help back there, um…"

“Izuku, my name is Izuku.” They weren’t going to give him their family name? Odd, but Hitoshi figured that everything about this kid so far had been odd.

”Thanks Izuku,” and then, as he turned to leave he blurted out, “I’m Shinso Hitoshi.”

The kid smiled and nodded before walking into an alleyway, and when Hitoshi, surprised that they hadn’t gone down the road, checked, he found nobody there. Thoroughly unnerved by the encounter, he rushed back home, partially wondering if he’d somehow just made a mistake.

Chapter End Notes

HITOSHI!!!! My baby boy!

Once again apologies for the late chapter, it *might* be like that for the next two weeks as well.

Chapter 78: I don't think that's how you're supposed to make friends.

Chapter Summary

Izuku bumps into a familiar face, and Hitoshi is very confused.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku hummed to themselves as they wandered through the park feeling the leaves crunch under their shoes and the breeze in their hair while they watched the people hanging around the area, they sighed contentedly. Normally, they'd prefer to stay by their parents' side and enjoy the picnic, but they were pretty antsy today, so Papa had told them to be back in twenty minutes and stay where they could be reached in case of emergency. Luckily, people watching was rather easy to do in a public park, so Izuku settled for walking around until they had to go back, they had their notebook in hand, making notes on whatever quirks they could identify, mostly mutation quirks. It was a challenge, trying to figure out what someone's quirk was without seeing it in action, but Izuku loved it, normal analysis was like child's play by now, it felt nice to really have to wrack their brain about something.

Their eyes scanned the crowds, looking for someone interesting. There was a lady with blue skin walking her dogs, Izuku giggled to themselves when they realised that both the dogs had the same kind of bob hairstyle as the lady's purple hair. Then there were the poor parents trying to wrangle their rather rambunctious child, who kept trying to lift a fish out of the lake by pulling the water around it, Izuku almost glanced past them before doing a double take, weren't those a pair of heroes!? A trio of people stood away from most others, a tall person with sunglasses and a man with a cigarette in his mouth were amusedly watching a man who looked like he belonged in a theatre production animatedly relayed some kind of story. And Izuku nearly missed the kid hiding around some trees, they seemed to blend into the shadows, only their hair stuck out.

Suddenly, their eyes landed on a specific pair of people, one adult and

one teenager, and they grinned, it was that kid they'd helped out the other day! Shinso Hitoshi? Yeah, that was his name! They supposed the adult with him was his dad, they looked almost identical if not for the fact that the older Shinso's hair wasn't defying gravity, instead pulled into a bun. Izuku looked back to where their parents were for a moment, making sure they wouldn't be going too far, before they happily made their way over to the pair. They approached Shinso and waved at him when-

"Oh fucking hell!" Shinso shrieked, falling backwards, and his father seemed to have a similar kind of shock, stepping back and putting a hand over his heart.

Izuku blinked for a moment, "um, hello?"

Shinso took a moment to cam his breathing before responding, "hi again, I suppose you just make a habit of appearing and disappearing like that." Oh, right, Izuku was so excited they'd forgotten not to be quiet, oops.

They still found the way he phrased what was clearly supposed to be a question odd, but they suspected that had something to do with his quirk, something happened when he asked people questions, maybe they were forced to answer? Or was it the act of answering that caused the effect? There were endless possibilities, but it would have to be something deemed 'villainous' given the behaviour of those bullies.

Shinso's father spoke up, "you know this kid Hitoshi?" He looked at Izuku curiously, and they stared back, well wasn't that interesting, it seemed that Shinso might have inherited his quirk from his mother.

Shinso looked like he wanted to run for a moment before sighing, "uh, yeah, I, ran into them on the way home from school the other day." It took every ounce of Izuku's self-control not to throw a questioning glance at the other kid, if he wanted to play it like this, then they could match that easily.

"It's very nice to meet you! I'm Izuku!" They gave him their sweetest smile and just like that, they could practically *see* the suspicion fade away, Aunt Nemuri would be proud.

"It's nice to meet you too kid, the name's Shinso Chikara," he gave them a lopsided grin before playfully ruffling his son's hair, much to the younger Shinso's chagrin, "I'm this bundle of gloom's dad."

Shinso took a moment to wriggle away from his dad, glaring at him as he hurriedly fixed his now messed up hair, “yeah, anyways,” he turned back to Izuku, “I don't suppose you want to explain what you're doing here.”

Izuku was a bit caught off guard for a moment, they, hadn’t actually thought about that, they were just happy to see the boy again, and to see that he seemed to be okay, granted it had been a little over a week, but still. But they quickly got themself a reason to stick around, and it was kinda true! “You never told me what your quirk was, I’m curious.”

Hitoshi felt his face go pale at the question, of course, they’d probably realised they’d made a mistake by helping him, “um, that depends on the reason” He said cautiously, they might be quirkless, and that was one detail that definitely stuck in his mind, after all, a quirkless person kicking the asses of three quirked people was not something you saw, well, *ever*, but that didn’t mean they wouldn’t see him as a danger to society. He glanced at his dad, who had a similar look of concern on his face, but this was directed towards Hitoshi himself, silently asking if this kid was going to be trouble, Hitoshi tilted his head subtly, he honestly had no clue what this weirdo’s deal was.

The kid, Izuku if Hitoshi remembered correctly, grinned in a way that made Hitoshi want to hide behind his father, even though he was way too old to do something that childish, he was a teenager now for goodness sakes! Izuku either didn’t notice his growing concern or just ignored it as they pulled out a little spiral notebook from their pocket, it was green and had ‘Field Notes 5’ scrawled on the cover in neat kanji, they took a pen from where it was resting in the notebook’s spine and flipped it open. They stopped at a specific page and turned it to Hitoshi, it looked like complete and utter gibberish, and when he looked back at them confused they coughed, embarrassed, and held the notebook under their arm so they could sign. “I do quirk analysis as, a hobby, and I wanted to do yours, if you don’t mind.”

Hitoshi frowned slightly, wasn’t this kid around the same age as him? As far as he knew there weren’t any quirk analysis courses for young teenagers, at least none that would require the kind of scribbled, whatever that was, in their notebook. Unfortunately his dad seemed to find this information delightful, “really? How long have you been doing it?”

“Well, I started at four, I got interested because I don’t have a quirk myself, but I didn’t really get *good* at it until I was ten,” Izuku

explained, smiling at his dad, ignoring the shocked look that momentarily crossed his face. Hitoshi didn't like this one bit, he knew his dad kept trying to make him socialize, but fuck that, he didn't *want* any friends.

"That's incredible, isn't it Hitoshi?" Dad glanced at him, and Hitoshi quietly grumbled an agreement.

Izuku looked between the two of them, hopefully sensing that Hitoshi didn't really want them there, "so, can I analyse your quirk? I mean, if you don't want to, I won't push..."

Hitoshi took one look at their sheepish face, and then at his dad's hopeful expression, and sighed, "fine," he muttered, wondering if he could frustrate them into leaving by giving them little to no actual information. Well, he could tell them what they'd already deduced, "it's a voice quirk, most people don't like it."

Izuku nodded, "and it has something to do with questions, something I'm guessing you got from your mother's side since your father doesn't word his questions weirdly like you do."

Hitoshi scowled, well, they clearly weren't bluffing about at least being decent at this stuff, whether they were good, he'd rather not find out. Dad laughed, "oh, no, he got a mix of me and his mum's quirks." Hitoshi glared at his father again, trying to get him to stop giving this kid information.

"I see, so the activation requirement is from your mother, and something else, probably the effect, is similar to your father's quirk." Izuku hummed quietly, "and judging by your reluctance to activate it, I'm guessing the effect isn't something mundane, and if people don't like it, then I'm guessing it would be categorized by most as 'villainous.'"

That was all things they knew from saving him, and he wasn't about to give them any more to work with-

"Does it have something to do with influencing people?"

Hitoshi snapped his gaze to Izuku, how the hell did they figure that one out? Perhaps noticing his utter confusion, they smiled and noted something down before explaining, "it's your dad, when I was talking to him I noticed I was telling him a bit more than I normally would, like being quirkless, so if you got something in your quirk from him, and if it wasn't the activation, well."

His dad blinked, surprised, and Hitoshi understood why, most people didn't notice Charisma working its magic, and the few times someone did it was either a psychic or the person had been told beforehand. Who the hell was this kid?

Upon realising that they weren't going to get a response, the kid continued, "so based on that, I have a few theories, the most likely being that you can force people to answer your questions. But it could also be that someone answering your question is the activation requirement and that lets you influence them in some way, either by making them trust you more, like your dad's quirk seems to do, or something adjacent to that."

Hitoshi's jaw dropped at that, for having almost no information, that was *uncomfortably* close to the right answer, and it had taken this kid less than a few minutes to figure it all out. "I, well," he stammered.

"So I'm right!" Izuku looked triumphant, as if they'd solved a mystery, "now, if you could give me the details," they signed before opening their notebook again, their round eyes seeming much sharper as they stared unblinkingly at Hitoshi.

Hitoshi and his dad shared a slightly concerned glance, before Hitoshi sighed, "my quirk is called Brainwashing, I can mind control anyone who answers my questions in any way," he muttered quietly, looking away from Izuku.

They let out a quiet gasp and he worked up the courage to look up and see the disgusted expression on their face...

Uh...

Izuku was grinning wildly as they scribbled in their notebook, like a cat that just caught a mouse, eyes shining with a kind of excitement that Hitoshi wasn't sure he liked. They then snapped their book shut and turned to him, still smiling, "can you ask me something?"

What? Hitoshi was utterly taken aback by that, of all the things he'd expected them to say, it certainly wasn't *asking to be mind controlled*. He heard his dad sputter next to him, equally as shocked by the frankly insane request.

"Uh, that's probably not a good idea-"

"Do it."

Hitoshi hesitated for a moment, but the intense stare he was getting, seriously they hadn't blinked the entire time, was activating some instinct in his brain telling him to run for the hills. "Okay, okay, just, please stop looking at me like that," he said, voice going higher than he'd ever admit, "um, what colour is the sky?" He asked, putting his quirk into the question.

"Blue!" And just like that, their eyes went white and their expression dropped to neutral, and Hitoshi felt the slight tug at the back of his own mind letting him know he'd made a connection.

"Now, uh, wake up!" He commanded, and the life returned to Izuku's face, they then gave him the brightest grin he'd ever seen.

"That was incredible!" They said, "it was like, I was in my head, but it felt like I was in the backseat, like my body wasn't my own!" They proceeded to furiously scribble down notes, presumably trying to document what they'd felt.

They were far too gleeful about the whole experience in Hitoshi's opinion, and it was further cementing his conviction that this kid was just plain crazy and probably the spawn of some unholy being. "Alright, I guess, but you probably didn't have to make yourself the guinea pig."

Izuku shook their head, closing their notebook momentarily, "but firsthand accounts are always the best in my experience! And I didn't think you'd actively hurt me, and I was right!"

Yep, batshit insane.

After a few seconds, Hitoshi heard a phone ringing, at first he thought it was his own phone, since the sound was the little intro jingle to Put Your Hands Up Radio, but then Izuku reached into their own pocket, eyes widening as they stared at the screen. They answered the call, whispering something that Hitoshi couldn't hear, huh, so they *could* speak, were they selectively mute then? After a few moments they shoved their phone back into their pocket, "my papa called, I have to go, can I talk to you some other time? I still have so many questions about your quirk!"

"Uh," Hitoshi looked at his dad, completely lost about what he should do, on one hand, he didn't fancy the idea of *more* interaction with this kid, but then there was that hopeful look on his dad's face, and he caved. "Yeah sure, um, where do you want to meet?"

The kid giggled, “oh don’t worry, I’ll find you.”

Hitoshi and his dad shared another look, but when they both glanced back to ask what the hell *that* meant, Izuku was gone, as if they’d never even been there in the first place.

“What the fuck just happened?” Hitoshi muttered, to himself, momentarily forgetting his own rules.

His dad shook his head, just as confused as he was, “I think, you just made a friend?”

Chapter End Notes

Aww, friendship!

Also, we met one of three planned OCs in this fic who are going to be recurring side characters, so here's a little bio for Hitoshi's dad:

Shinso Chikara
Age: 32 (would be 34 at the start of cannon)
Sexuality/Gender: Omnisexual cis man (he/him)
Quirk: Charisma, an emitter quirk that creates an invisible aura around the user, causing everyone who interacts with them to view them as an inherently trustworthy and cool person.
Voice: Kenichi Matsuyama (Galo Thymos from Promare)

(Ps. everyone Izuku describes in the park is a cannon character, if anyone wants to take some guesses be my guest.)

Chapter 79: Almost friends.

Chapter Summary

Hitoshi gets saved by Izuku, again.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue
Signed and Spoken Dialogue

Warning: someone basically does a violent hate crime to Hitoshi in this one, so, uh, if you don't want to read that, skip the part between the * signs.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was a lovely evening, the sky was clear of clouds and just starting to look golden with the setting sun, a cool breeze swept through the air, and it was shockingly quiet despite the many people making their way home from work or school. But that was currently all going unnoticed as Hitoshi subtly checked behind him while walking as nonchalantly as he could, determined to lose whoever was following him *fast*. At first, his paranoia had seemed a bit unwarranted, but really, some random kid that's maybe secretly a demon tells you that they'll 'find you' and you'd start looking over your shoulder all the time too. But the vigilance had not paid off exactly how Hitoshi had hoped it would, instead of catching that weirdo in the act of sneaking up on him, he'd managed to spot someone he was about eighty percent sure lived near his apartment following him. Now, the guy could have just been walking home from work, but if that was the case, there was no reason he would have continued following *after* Hitoshi began taking the long way home.

So, overall, Hitoshi was mostly thinking that this was going to be the day he died, in some random alleyway at the hands of someone who probably wouldn't even have the decency to let his body be recovered. A real shitty way to go out, but he didn't think the universe would care all that much, it probably thought that this was some fun irony, to have the dangerous villain be killed by some random asshole, either that or nobody was paying attention, not to someone like him. If only he could make it somewhere safe, and if only he had the courage to take his phone out and call his dad, at least that way, even if this

wound up being the end of him, *somebody* would know what happened, there were too many names like his on the 'missing' list that didn't belong there, he didn't want to be another.

*

He felt tears begin to form in his eyes as he tried to stealthily get his phone, trying not to alert his stalker that he was trying to call for help. But he was too late as he felt someone grab his backpack and use that to throw him to the ground. His phone skittered out of reach and as Hitoshi tried to dive for it, the guy kicked it away and stomped on Hitoshi's arm, pinning him in place. Hitoshi muffled a scream as he felt the full weight of this grown adult on his shoulder, if he died here, he wasn't going to go out begging for mercy. All he heard was a quiet laugh for his display of bravado.

"What? Just going to roll over and die then?" The man taunted, "I guess you know what's coming to you, monster."

Hitoshi didn't dignify that with a response, just sneering at the man.

"*There's* the feistiness," the man kicked Hitoshi in the side before grabbing him and throwing him to the ground again, "what're you gonna do huh? Ask one of those vile questions of yours?"

"N-no, I can't control people who don't have brains," Hitoshi snarled out, tasting the metallic bitterness of blood on his lips, he tried to get up only to feel a shoe press down on his back, forcing him to the ground.

"Big talk from a little brat," the man had to be mocking him, trying to draw this out so Hitoshi would suffer a humiliating death, "the world's gonna be much better off without you in it."

Hitoshi went quiet as he continued to be kicked around and stomped on, the man wouldn't even punch him, as if Hitoshi's suffering wasn't even worth getting his hands dirty for, taunting insults filling the air as the man went on and on about how he was doing everyone a favour by killing a villain like Hitoshi before he got to hurt anyone.

The quiet click of a pocketknife being unfolded made Hitoshi's heart beat so fast it drowned out nearly everything else. This was it then.

"After I'm done with you, even your precious daddy's not gonna recognize ya," the man laughed to himself, "not that he'd want to, I bet he'd thank me for gettin' rid of you."

That was the last straw, Hitoshi felt the tears roll down his face, his poor dad, how would he react to knowing his son died like this, and not even getting a body to bury? Hitoshi could imagine the grief on his face, the disbelief, he'd probably blame himself, thinking that, after doing everything to make sure Hitoshi was safe, he couldn't protect him. If there was one thing Hitoshi wished in that moment, was that his dad, his wonderful, too good for this world dad, would never have to bear the burden of his death; maybe it would be better to end up 'missing,' at least that way there would be hope.

Cold metal pressed into the skin on Hitoshi's shoulder, a line of pain forming as the knife cut through the fabric of his uniform and began sawing at his flesh, he was going to be dismembered alive. Hitoshi closed his eyes, accepting his fate.

*

The weight on his back was gone in an instant, and a loud thud off to the side made him wonder if the man had fallen somehow. He scrambled to his feet, ignoring the pain that shot through him as he turned to run, whatever had happened he wasn't about to waste this chance.

That was when he saw his attacker, lying on the ground and shielding his head from being whacked with a staff. And standing over him, was *Izuku* of all people, white hot *fury* in their eyes as they kept beating at the man until he was unconscious. They then spat on his body before turning to Hitoshi, expression turning to concern on a dime, just as it had the last time they saved him.

"Shinso! Are you alright?" Izuku asked, bounding up to him, metal staff dropped momentarily; where on earth did they get *that*? And why the hell were they just carrying it around with them!?

"Uh, yeah, I'm, fine. I'm fine." Hitoshi was honestly at a complete loss for what to say, but, at least he was still alive.

Izuku glanced at the man, "was that the first time?"

Hitoshi shook his head, "uh, no, actually, but that *is* the first time anyone's gotten violent about it, well, other than my classmates when no-one's looking."

Izuku hummed, wide eyes looking over Hitoshi's injuries as if trying to catalogue them all, "do you want me to walk you home?"

Hitoshi wasn't sure what to make of the offer, Izuku's presence wasn't going to deter anyone from trying to hurt him, so, were they offering to fight anyone who tried!? No, that wasn't it, that would be madness, even for someone that Hitoshi was still not convinced wasn't a creature from hell. But still, he glanced at the grown man lying unconscious on the ground, maybe it wouldn't be a terrible idea to have someone who could pack that kind of punch with him until he got home. "Yeah, that, that would be great, thanks."

Izuku nodded and picked up their staff, putting it halfway in that patchworked yellow backpack they were wearing before following quietly behind Hitoshi as he made his way down the street. They didn't run into much trouble, although they ran into one of Hitoshi's classmates at some point, but she just backed off upon seeing the nasty glare she was getting from Izuku, maybe Haraguchi and her goons had gone running their mouths about what happened. Hitoshi shuddered to think he was going to be the topic of gossip for the next week or so, but it wasn't going to be worse than the insults he normally got, and maybe it would keep people away.

After a while of barely acknowledging each other's presence, Izuku began signing while they walked, "so, is your dad going to be worried about this?"

Hitoshi felt a sharp flare of indignation at the question, but forced himself to calm down, it was a reasonable concern, almost no parents with kids like him actually cared if their children got hurt, not unless they also had undesirable quirks. But he gave Izuku a weary smile, "yeah, he'll be fussing over me for ages if he finds out."

Izuku tilted their head, "I see."

Hitoshi hummed to himself for a moment, "I suppose you probably have some experience with that."

Izuku sighed "kind of? My biological parents abandoned me the moment they found out, and I spent a couple years on the street. But I have an amazing family now, so really it's all in the past as far as I'm concerned."

Hitoshi didn't know what to say to that, he supposed they were lucky they had people who were just as kind as his dad taking care of them, but at the same time, he couldn't help the tiny bit of envy for how they seemed so carefree when talking about what they'd gone through. "Yeah, I guess it's nice that you don't have to deal with that

anymore," he muttered.

Izuku glanced at him oddly, maybe he'd let a bit too much bitterness slip into his tone, but they just turned back to the street, continuing to walk beside him until the pair reached Hitoshi's apartment.

Hitoshi turned back to Izuku, "thanks for the help, I'll be fine from here, besides, you should probably get back to, whoever you came here with."

Izuku shrugged, "if you're sure, I mean, my brother won't mind too much if I take a bit longer, he knows where I am."

"Yeah, my dad's gonna be waiting, and I kind of don't want to explain that you beat up one of our neighbours," honestly he was just glad the guy was their neighbour to their left, he wasn't sure he'd have survived an encounter with their upstairs neighbours, not with the endless explosions that seemed to happen up there.

"That guy was your neighbour?" Izuku frowned, "he won't try to retaliate, will he?"

Hitoshi shuddered, that was a distinct possibility, "I'm sure it'll be fine, if anything happens, my dad can talk him down."

Izuku tilted their head again, Hitoshi was starting to wonder if they always did that when they were thinking. They brought out their notebook, scribbling something down and tearing it off the page, handed him the piece of paper which had some numbers written on it. After an inquisitive look, which thankfully wouldn't trigger his quirk, they clarified "if you run into trouble again, the first one's my phone number."

Hitoshi glanced at the numbers again, "right, that's the *first* one..."

At the implied question, Izuku looked a bit sheepish, "well, I thought, you don't seem to know how to fight very well," they began, before quickly adding "not that I think you're weak or anything, I just, well, I could show you a few tricks if you liked, the number is a location we could meet at."

And oh boy wasn't that tempting, Hitoshi could imagine the looks on his bullies' faces if he could knock them on the floor with a single punch like Izuku seemingly could. Although he wasn't sure he *wanted* to know how they fought like a feral creature, he'd be stupid to pass up the chance to learn self-defence, after all the only reason he hadn't

already was because no classes would accept someone like him. So while this felt an awful lot like he was making a deal with the devil, he nodded, “I’m free on Saturday, and I’ll probably be able to get away from my dad for a while.”

Izuku grinned and scurried into an alleyway, out of curiosity, Hitoshi looked.

And just as expected, gone.

Hitoshi sighed, turning back to the piece of paper and memorizing the number as well as the, wait, that wasn’t an address, were those *coordinates*!? Who the hell just knew how to read coordinates like that!?

It was almost dark by the time Izuku got home, giggling as they watched Touya get roped into staying for dinner.

“So, how’d the day go little listeners?” Papa asked while he was waiting for water to boil.

“Shockingly smooth,” Touya grinned, ruffling Izuku’s hair, **“this gremlin was only out of my sight for like, fifteen minutes, and nothing insane happened, so I’m calling that a win.”** Izuku’s face must have given something away because Touya immediately pinched the bridge of his nose and muttered a few curses under his breath.

Their dad sighed, **“Izuku, what did you do?”** He asked cautiously.

Izuku gave their family a sheepish grin, **“remember that kid with the brainwashing quirk I told you about? I, uh, kind of saved him from getting murdered, and then I walked him home.”**

Dad began to talk once again, but was cut off by Papa, **“you did *what?*”** The little bit of his quirk that leaked into his voice was quietened by Erasure.

Izuku huffed, **“it was one guy, and besides, now I have Shinso’s number, and I’m gonna see him on Saturday!”**

Touya laughed at that, **“so you got a new buddy by saving his life,”** he shoved Izuku playfully, **“you really need to find less stressful ways of making friends.”**

“This kid seriously agreed to meet you again?” Their papa asked, genuinely curious since most people were a bit freaked out by Izuku’s,

well, *everything*.

Izuku nodded, **“I offered to show him how to defend himself, he accepted.”**

They heard their dad sigh in exasperation, **“maybe I should go with you in that case-“**

“No!” Izuku hurriedly shut that idea down, **“I don’t want to freak him out, and I don’t think he’s going to trust you, or me if I bring you, and I really want him to be my friend, so…”**

Touya gave them a sidelong glance, **“you seem awfully determined to keep this kid around, any reason?”**

Izuku sighed, running their fingers through their hair, **“I mean, he’s a normal kid, mostly, I just thought, it’d be nice to have a friend who’s not connected to the whole, ‘hero’ business, that’s all.”**

Papa smiled sympathetically at them, **“so you don’t want us involved in case he figures out who you are?”**

Izuku nodded sheepishly, to which their dad huffed, **“fine, but I’ll stay nearby in case something happens, alright?”**

“Yeah, got it.” Izuku wasn’t about to let this chance slip by them, it seemed that Shinso hadn’t been too weirded out by their behaviour so far, and he was already starting to be their friend, now all they had to do was not scare him off.

Chapter End Notes

> Ehehehe, looks like Hitoshi's going to remain oblivious for a while.

Chapter 80: Training.

Chapter Summary

Hitoshi gets his first lesson in self defence.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hitoshi was more than a bit anxious when he woke up that morning, going through his normal routine as fast as he possibly could before rushing out into the kitchen and rummaging through the cabinets for some breakfast. Today was the day Izuku had promised to begin showing him how to fight, and he couldn't say he wasn't excited, as much as he was still kind of weirded out by the kid, they actually seemed alright, a bit over excitable, but terrifyingly fierce. He wondered if he'd soon be able to do those insane moves that they did, like managing to knock a grown man flat on his ass with one hit.

He heard someone cough quietly behind him and he turned to see his dad, leaning against the table with his arms crossed, smirking in amusement, "still sleepy are we?" He asked, barely holding back a laugh.

Hitoshi gave him a confused look, "uh, no, not, really."

"Huh," Dad muttered, "then I guess you've got something going on in that noggin of yours, 'cause you walked past breakfast."

Hitoshi blinked before his eyes wandered to the food sitting on the table, a plate of pancakes already decorated with his favourite toppings. "Oh, oops." Hitoshi laughed awkwardly before sitting down to eat, pausing when he saw the way the toppings were arranged, each of the three pancakes had two blueberries for eyes and a line of honey making mouths with different expressions. He stared at it a moment longer before glaring at his dad whose smile faltered a bit.

"What, is something wrong?" Dad asked, "I just thought, you've been kinda grumpy all week, and these used to cheer you up all the time so..."

Hitoshi scoffed, "I'm fine dad, besides, *pancakes with faces*, really? I'm

thirteen! Not a baby!" He muttered as he began to eat them anyways, because who'd want to let good food go to waste, even if said food was entirely childish.

"Oh, right," Dad smiled, "how could I forget, my little boy's not so little anymore." He said, ruffling Hitoshi's hair, for which Hitoshi glared at him again.

"Whatever," Hitoshi grumbled, finishing his food as fast as he could before putting the plate in the sink.

It was a few hours later, when it was getting close to noon, that Hitoshi dared bring it up, "I'm gonna go for a run if that's alright."

"A run?" Dad looked slightly confused, but had a bright smile on his face nonetheless as he began looking around for his phone and the apartment keys, "really? Sure! Just let me know where we're going and give me a minute so I can get ready!"

"Actually," Hitoshi cut his dad off, but then immediately realised that he hadn't thought about a good excuse, "I, uh, thought I'd go alone, if that's fine, just to the park nearby, the small one." Obviously he wasn't going to tell his dad the actual truth, those coordinates; again, seriously, why coordinates!? He had to look up a converter online for this shit! Had led to a small, abandoned factory in the city, about a ten minute walk from Hitoshi's apartment, and the park was just the closest thing he could think of that his dad would be okay with him going alone to.

His dad put the apartment keys back in the drawer, "oh, well," he huffed, "of course, as long as you come back by lunchtime, and please take your phone with you, and call me if anything happens, and-"

"I know! I know!" Hitoshi scowled, grabbing his backpack and phone and heading out of the door, "I'll be fine dad, geez."

He made his way down the street with a quiet excitement, pulling out his phone and opening his text messages with Izuku, they hadn't actually talked much, just figuring out exact times and stuff. The last text on the conversation was from last night, with Izuku asking him to bring a water bottle and a snack with him, basic stuff according to them, wouldn't want him collapsing in the middle of training. Although Hitoshi wondered if it was really going to get that intense, he still brought the stuff, having put the bottle in his backpack in the middle of the night, and then visibly putting a snack in it this morning so that his dad wouldn't get suspicious. He sent them a text that he

was on his way and kept walking at a slightly faster pace.

The place itself was one that Hitoshi had passed by a few times on his way to and from the park, but he'd never given it more thought than just speeding past the rows of empty factory buildings in an attempt to not leave himself alone for too long. But once he got to the place, he somehow found himself braver than he'd ever been for standing in a place he could easily get mugged, maybe it was because he'd shown up prepared to fight, or maybe it was because, after this day, he'd be able to start fighting back.

He made his way past the main gate to the factory and into an alleyway, the coordinates showed that Izuku would be waiting somewhere around here, he shuffled in place for a moment, looking around curiously as he waited for them to appear like they always did. But, as the seconds ticked by, nothing. He was sure it was the right time, so where were they? He checked every part of the alleyway, even inside the dumpster, which he kind of regrated.

Suddenly, a soft scrunching sound echoed through the silent alleyway and he spun around, expecting Izuku, but there was only a small, crumpled piece of paper. He tentatively unfurled it, and on it were the words 'look up silly," with a doodle of a ghost as the signature. Hitoshi cautiously took the note's advice and looked up at the rooftops above him, stumbling back in surprise when he saw Izuku just sitting on the edge of one, swinging their legs impatiently as they waited, presumably, for him to notice them.

"Oh, hi, um, that's, certainly a waiting spot," Hitoshi said, wondering how on earth they got up there in the first place.

"Is it?" They asked, feigning ignorance as they hopped down and into the alleyway.

"Yeah, it is." He noted that they had a slightly different energy about them today, less bouncing off the walls and more, *controlled* somehow.

Izuku hummed, "my dad always says that nobody ever looks up, so that's the best hiding place." They signed as they led Hitoshi a bit further down the alleyway and squeezed behind the factory to show what looked like a run-down storage unit.

As they entered the building, Hitoshi glanced around the place, "this is, *interesting*," he said, staring at the large space in the middle where a bunch of boxes had clearly recently been moved aside to make room.

”I found it a couple months ago, makes a great place to hide,” Izuku said, placing their own backpack down on one of the boxes and gesturing for him to do the same.

“Uh huh,” Hitoshi narrowed his eyes, “so your parents don’t know you’re here.”

Izuku giggled, “oh, they do, actually, my dad is probably somewhere around the area. *But,*” they added hastily “he promised not to interfere unless there was an actual emergency!”

Hitoshi raised an eyebrow at that, clearly their parents were incredibly lenient with them, then again, considering that they could probably get themself out of most trouble, it kind of seemed reasonable. He shook his head, that wasn’t important, he’d come here to learn, he thought, turning to Izuku, “we’re staring the lesson soon.”

Izuku grinned wildly, “right now actually.” And they tackled him.

Hitoshi yelped as he was knocked to the ground and pinned, “w-wait, I wasn’t prepared!” He complained, only to hear them laughing at him as they stood up.

“Yeah, but nobody’s *prepared* to get into a street fight,” they then offered him a hand up, which he gladly took.

“That sounds untrue,” Hitoshi said, to which Izuku just shrugged.

“Right, the next time someone who’s trying to hurt you warns you that they’re about to punch you, let me know.”

Hitoshi huffed, seeing their point, “alright, so that’s the first lesson, always be prepared.”

Izuku nodded, “and if you do that you can-”

They didn’t finish their sentence before lunging at him again, he startled and quickly jumped to the side, although they didn’t let up as the next punch clipped his ear and a sweep of the leg knocked him flat on his ass. Hitoshi blinked before scrambling to his feet in time to avoid a kick and promptly being pinned back to the ground by another tackle.

After about half an hour of him trying, and failing, to keep himself upright for more than thirty seconds, Izuku decided that it was time for a break and let Hitoshi grab his water and snack from his bag. He

definitely understood why they'd asked him to bring those now as he downed nearly half the bottle and devoured the strawberry wafers he'd snatched from the pantry. Izuku watched him with amusement as they munched casually on some almond cookies they said their papa made.

Hitoshi's clothes were already almost soaked in sweat, and he was partially sure his legs would be jelly the next morning, but when Izuku asked if he was alright with continuing he said yes because he wasn't about to cut the lesson short.

So they went back to the centre area, and this time, Izuku stood differently, if he had to guess, it looked like they were preparing to block something. "Alright Shinso, you try hitting me now!" They said quickly before returning their hands to the blocking position.

Hitoshi paused, "uh, okay, I guess." He lined himself up and threw a light punch at Izuku's arms.

They easily blocked it and frowned, backing away for a moment, "you're not trying," they said, narrowing their eyes, "I can take a punch you know, again." They went back into the blocking stance faster than Hitoshi could process, it seemed to be a very practiced motion.

Hitoshi sighed and pulled his arm back to throw a proper punch, which Izuku sidestepped before catching his wrist. "No," they signed after letting go of him, "punching like that is going to break your hand. You want wrist straight, thumb on the outside, and don't lock your elbow like that," they then demonstrated, showing him how they formed a fist before throwing a solid punch into the air in front of them.

Hitoshi stared at them, and then at his own arm, copying what they'd just shown him and throwing an, admittedly far weaker looking, punch in front of him. He looked at them for confirmation, and they nodded, gesturing for him to continue trying to hit them.

As expected, Hitoshi couldn't land a single one of the punches he threw at them, but judging by the approving looks he was getting, he must have been doing *something* right. And after another half hour or so, Izuku was grinning at him, and he could definitely feel that he wasn't thinking as much about how he had to position his hands, in all fairness, he was only doing the same set of two punches repeatedly, but it seemed to be something.

By the time Hitoshi was starting to get too tired to keep punching straight, Izuku called the training to an end for the day, going. “For someone with zero experience, you did great!”

“But I still couldn’t land a hit on you,” Hitoshi grumbled, gratefully catching the hand towel that Izuku tossed his way.

Izuku shook their head, “I’ve been doing this for a long time, you’re just starting, and besides, the punching isn’t the main thing, the dodging is.”

“Because dodging is *obviously* more important,” He muttered.

“Yes, it’s more important that you can get away from a fight than you being able to win that same fight, especially if you’re gonna get in trouble for defending yourself.”

Once again, they made a very good point, and they probably knew exactly what they were talking about, given their quirk status and all, and he’d be lying if he said the praise didn’t boost his ego just a little. Hitoshi smiled a bit before realising that he really needed to get going, “I, uh, I’ll see you next week then,” grabbing his backpack.

Izuku nodded, grinning at him, “same time?”

“Sure,” and Hitoshi quickly ran all the way home, thanking the fact that he’d decided to make his excuse running so that the sweat sticking to his clothes didn’t look too weird. And despite the fact that his muscles were probably going to hate him in the morning, in that moment he felt a tiny spark of determination flare to life in his heart. Not the vengeful kind that had been fuelling him ever since he was six, no, this was something different, a tiny ember of something he didn’t quite know the name of yet. And for all that terrified him, he couldn’t help but want to see what it grew into.

Chapter End Notes

> As far as Izuku was concerned, that was a play date.
>
> Also, just because my friend called him annoying when I showed her chapter 78, and I already try not to add OCs in fics unless I can make them entertaining, what are y'all's thoughts about Chikara?

Chapter 81: An overzealous hello!

Chapter Summary

Izuku and Hitoshi run into somebody at the factory.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku wandered down the street to their meeting place with Shinso, the old storage unit had made a great training ground so far, and especially since it was about halfway between Shinso's apartment and their own. They were honestly just glad that their dad had agreed that they'd be safe enough on their own after he'd scouted out the area, as in, he lurked on rooftops scrutinizing everyone who passed by for any hint of trouble. As they hummed quietly to themself, eyes constantly darting around, looking for any trouble trying to sneak up on them, they wondered whether it was time to move onto some tougher stuff. Shinso had been rather quick on the uptake when it came to learning how to punch, but for some reason, his dodging skills were still subpar as far as Izuku was concerned, and really, he wouldn't be able to keep up in a proper sparring session.

They shook their head, there was time to think about that later, nobody could get anything done in only three lessons after all, and they'd have to ask their parents for teaching advice again. For now they smiled to themself as they approached the gates of the abandoned factory, everything inside all coloured with rusty greys and blacks and probably full of stuff that could kill someone. They were super glad there wasn't any dangerous stuff in the storage area, at least, not in the room they and Shinso used.

Much to their surprise, they saw him already standing there and looking around. He didn't seem to have noticed them yet, which was weird because he was actively looking for them, and they had tried to tell him multiple times to pay more attention to what was going on around him. And really, they weren't even trying to be sneaky most of the time, it wasn't their fault he kept forgetting to look up or listen for footsteps.

Izuku grinned to themself as they shifted their pace to a near silent lope, time for some situational awareness training.

They slunk to the other end of the wall from where Shinso was standing, hopping up to the top before checking the ground below them, no, nothing soft to land on, and they were going serious stealth mode this time. So instead they only partially dropped down so that they were hanging by their hands, and then carefully shimmied the rest of the way to where they needed to be before vaulting themself over and landing with a thud right behind Shinso.

The shrill screech that hit their ears was completely worth the look of wide-eyed shock on his face.

"*Izuku!*" Shinso exclaimed, one hand over his heart, "you can't just do that!"

Izuku tried to look solemn for about two seconds before they couldn't hold it anymore and burst into a fit of giggles, eyes watering as they tried to control their laughter. And after some more grumbling from Shinso and a bit of time to gather themself, they huffed quietly and explained, "sorry, but you didn't notice me walking up, so I thought I'd make a point."

"Yeah yeah, keep a better eye on my surroundings, I think I got that," Shinso said, the corners of his mouth turning up into a reluctant smile.

"Exactly!" Izuku agreed, "now, why don't we get to training, I think we've got to work on your..."

They trailed off mid-sentence as their gaze landed on the factory gate, all their instincts clicking into high gear for a reason they couldn't quite pin down, but if there was one thing people learned in their line of work, you *always* trusted your instincts. They knew, somewhere in the back of their mind, they must have registered that something was off, and since there didn't appear to be *immediate* danger, they decided they had the liberty of taking a precious few seconds to try and figure it out.

And right there, a nick in the metal of the gate that glinted a steely grey, shining like it hadn't had time to rust over yet, or even dull, it was made sometime today. Izuku glanced at Shinso, who was looking at them oddly, waiting for them to finish what they were saying mere seconds ago. Instead they shook their head, gesturing to the gate, "someone's been here recently."

Shinso's expression rapidly turned from confusion to concern as he began looking around frantically. Izuku just rolled their eyes and tapped him on the head to stop him from moving before shaking their head and signing, "for goodness sakes dummy, if they see you acting like that they're gonna know that we're onto them! Just, I'm going to investigate, go to our training spot and *stay put*."

Shinso shook his head, "no way, I'm not letting you go off on your own, if there's trouble I'll just stay out of the way."

Izuku sighed, "fine, but I go in first."

And with a nod from Shinso, they got back up on the wall, extending a hand to help him clamber up as well, although they really kind of just pulled him over. But with that, Izuku snuck their way past the doors when they heard clattering noises coming from the somewhere in the very back, where a bunch of half-finished machine parts were heaped into a pile at the end of a long-broken conveyer. They heard Shinso begin to walk up behind them, but they shook their head at him, handing him their backpack and signalling for him to hide behind one of the large machines, one of the ones without dangerous looking edges. He nodded and ducked behind what almost looked like a giant metal printer, though Izuku was sure that wasn't its actual purpose.

They began making their way towards the rattling pile of metal, hand gripping their staff, on a hairpin trigger to defend themself should this person, if it did turn out to be a person and not some animal making a home, tried to lunge at them. They crept up, noting that the noises lacked any sharpness, not the sound of claws scraping at metal, a sound they knew well from many accompanied excursions through U.A's vents, so this was probably a person. They ducked out of sight for a moment before carefully peeking their head over the pile of parts to see the perpetrator of this intrusion.

Huh.

It was a teenager, at least as far as Izuku could tell, rummaging through the parts with a fervour and speed that implied they were looking for something specific, pink dreadlocks tied up in a ponytail and out of their face which was covered by a pair of odd looking goggles. Beside the teen was a duffle bag already holding a few pieces of scrap, and they appeared to be humming to themself as they worked.

Izuku looked around again, making sure they were alone, before picking a small rivet from the top of the pile and dropping it next to the other kid, who didn't seem to notice in the slightest, Izuku tried again a few more times before deciding to aim for the teen's arm. Finally, they paused in their work, looking up and removing their goggles as they looked around, and Izuku's mind began racing when they saw the other kid's eyes, they must have some kind of sight related quirk, probably something to do with precision or distance. They also could just be pulling from nothing and it was just a mutation, but they could have sworn that those yellow eyes had cross hairs in them, similar to Aunt Kazumi's. They shook their head and climbed properly onto the scrap heap, waving at the kid.

Mei hadn't been expecting much when she made her usual parts run to the factory, and at first, it had been her usual routine. Kick that stupid gate open because it always got rusted shut every few days, go through whatever was left in that giant building and find stuff for whatever her latest baby was. What she hadn't expected, was some random kid snooping around as well.

She locked eyes with them, and she thought the sharpness in their eyes looked an awful lot like her ma's when she got to take apart a cool machine, "oh, hello, were you looking for parts?"

The other kid quickly began to, oh, that was signing, Mei quickly shook her head, "sorry, I don't know JSL."

The kid huffed, frowning for a moment before dropping out of view and returning from the side of the pile, Mei's eyes locked onto the staff they were holding, weird, from this distance at least, it looked like good craftsmanship, at least not a toy.

The kid beckoned for her to follow them and she glanced at her duffle bag for a moment before deciding that this was a bit more interesting, she could finish up her scavenging trip later. She followed them to the main part of the factory, where they whistled sharply and waved at one of the engraving machines. Another kid hesitantly stepped out from behind the machine, holding two backpacks and staring at her with a very bewildered look.

The first kid quickly signed something before pulling a notebook out of the yellow backpack. The second kid just sighed, "they want you to introduce yourself, their name is Izuku by the way," the first kid, Izuku, nudged the second kid who sighed again, "and I'm Shinso Hitoshi."

That name sounded vaguely familiar to Mei, but she shook it off, holding her hand out, “I’m Hatsume Mei, future inventor!”

Neither of the pair shook her hand, Shinso stared at it like it was a bomb and Izuku was busy scribbling in the notebook. Still, she was undeterred, perhaps these could be future customers! “So, what brings you two around here?”

Shinso shrugged, glancing at Izuku who signed something before writing down something and showing it to Mei, *‘just hanging out, what about you? Looking for parts?’*

Mei nodded excitedly, “yeah, I’ve got a new baby in the works!”

“Uhh...” Shinso looked mildly concerned at that statement and Mei chuckled to herself, it seemed she’d gotten a bit *too* enthusiastic again.

“Ah, right, you see, I call my inventions my babies,” she glanced at Izuku, who hadn’t seemed startled by her odd phrasing, instead nodding quietly and showing her something else they wrote.

‘I get it, because you’re putting all that hard work and love into making them, they kind of become your children.’

Mei grinned and nodded “yeah! Exactly!”

Shinso just looked between the pair, “uh, okay then. Hey Izuku, let’s let Hatsume continue scavenging, and we should go do what we came here for.”

Izuku huffed and gave Shinso a knowing look before writing something, *‘don’t worry about him, he just doesn’t want to get late going home.’*

Mei giggled and Shinso glared at his, friend? Maybe? And that’s about when it clicked she *had* heard that name before, or at least the family name.

“Oh! *You’re* the kid living downstairs from me and my mums!” She blurted out, excited to have figured out that connection.

Shinso’s face immediately paled, “*oh*, um, I suppose your mums are the causes of the explosions I keep hearing.”

Mei tilted her head, that was kind of weird to just assume that, and rude, her ma and mama were *excellent* mechanics thank you very

much, and she would not stand for that kind of insult. “No, actually, that’s me, sometimes my babies just blow up, don’t worry about it.”

She noticed Izuku frown and begin writing something before shaking their head with a sigh and crossing it out. Meanwhile, Shinso still had that weird look on his face, tugging on the sleeve of Izuku’s jacket, “yeah, good to know, Izuku, c’mon, my dad’s going to be worried if I get late!” Izuku just giggled and followed him out of the factory, waving goodbye to her as they did.

Mei stood there for a moment before remembering what she’d come to do and rushing off back to that pile of hidden treasure, but, she did wonder if she’d run into those two again.

Chapter End Notes

A wild inventor appears!

Everyone pray for Shinso's sanity.

PS. My schedule is clearing up so we should be back to regular upload times now!

Chapter 82: Weird friends for a weird girl.

Chapter Summary

Mei tags along.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hitoshi wasn't sure what he'd expected to happen after last week's nonsense, but heading down to the entrance to the apartment building that morning to be greeted with this really should have been it if he thought about it for two seconds.

Hatsume, that was her name if he remembered right, stood in the ground floor hallway, staring at him blankly with an empty duffle bag slung over her shoulders. "Oh, hello, Shinso, was it?"

"Uh, yeah..." Hitoshi said reluctantly, unable to break the now awkward eye contact, "and you're the girl upstairs who keeps blowing stuff up."

Hatsume laughed at that, "sure am! Are you headed to the-"

Hitoshi quickly rushed up to her and covered her mouth, ignoring the odd looks he was getting from the few other people around, "shh," he hissed, "not so loud, someone's gonna hear!"

"Ooh," Hatsume's eyes sparkled as she whispered, "is it a secret? Whatever you and that Izuku kid are doing?"

"Just shut up!" Hitoshi muttered, storming out of the building as fast as he could.

Unfortunately, that didn't seem to be a deterrent in the slightest as he heard rapid footsteps behind him, and he turned around to see a blur of pink running after him, stopping once she caught up. "Well, if we're both headed to the, uh, place, then why don't we walk together!" She seemed way too enthusiastic about this, Hitoshi really didn't want to deal with it, Izuku on their own was energetic enough without this girl adding to the problem. Honestly, last time they'd seen her, Izuku

hadn't stopped scribbling in their notebook until they got to the storage unit, and now Hitoshi really, *really* wanted to know what the hell they could have possibly deduced from one meeting. He surreptitiously pulled out his phone, clicking open his messages with Izuku and texting them that the crazy inventor girl was trying to tag along with him and asking if they had any ideas on how to get rid of her. All he got in response was a ':3' and he immediately felt a feeling of dread settle in him, as if he'd just made some kind of mistake by telling them about this.

"Hey!" Hatsume snapped him out of his thoughts, "are you coming or not?" She asked, impatiently tapping her foot, Hitoshi sighed and figured that there was no way he was getting out of this now, so he followed her down the street, keeping a nervous eye out for anybody following him, reminding himself about the whole 'situational awareness' thing that Izuku was always going on about. But he really couldn't notice anything out of the ordinary, the streets were the same, and the buildings looked familiar, he could even recognize the people passing him on the street now, it had been a while since he could do that. A quiet voice in the back of his mind said that it wasn't going to last much longer, that he'd mess up somehow, or that someone would figure out what his dad's quirk was, and then they'd get chased out and have to find somewhere new again.

After a few minutes of trying and failing to tune out the mindless rambling spilling from Hatsume's mouth, Hitoshi heard her stop in her tracks, he blinked, realising he'd zoned out again as he stared at her. She was glaring daggers at someone nearby, upon further inspection, it was one of his classmates that constantly harassed him, he would bet money that they'd just called out some nasty nickname at him.

"What the hell did you just say punk!?" Hatsume yelled, and Hitoshi raised an eyebrow, partially curious about what she was trying to do.

"I wasn't talking to you missy! I was talking to that *freak* next to ya!" Hitoshi's classmate, he genuinely couldn't remember this one's name, yelled, laughing at their own insult.

Hitoshi gritted his teeth, attempting to keep walking and not cause a fight that would get his dad in trouble, but Hatsume took a step towards the asshole with a terrifying look on her face, oh no.

The bully scowled, "oh yeah? What are you gonna do about it?"

Hitoshi rolled his eyes, reaching out to pull Hatsume back, when the

other kid got hit in the back of the head with a small stick, with a sinking feeling, Hitoshi looked behind his classmate, and just as expected, Izuku, picking another stick off the ground and glowering. Hatsume also spotted them, grinning and waving hello before turning back to the problem at hand, her grin turning sharp, “ooh buddy, looks like you’re outnumbered!”

Hitoshi’s classmate just looked between the two people threatening them and scoffed, “fine, you got yourself some guard dogs did you? I bet you mind controlled them into this, *stupid villain!*” They spat at Hitoshi before storming off.

Izuku ran up to the pair, “Shinso! Are you alright? Did that kid hurt you? Do I need to go punch them?” Their hands were moving so fast that Hitoshi could hardly keep up with what they were saying.

“Yeah, I’m fine, and please don’t punch anyone, I don’t want to get in trouble for that,” Hitoshi muttered.

Meanwhile, Hatsume was smiling, “hi, uh, Izuku! It’s nice to see you again!”

Izuku’s eyes lit up to match hers, and Hitoshi inexplicably felt a headache forming, “it’s nice to see you again too!” They signed, and after a moment Hitoshi realised he’d have to translate again so he relayed the message to Hatsume.

“So, you guys are going to do whatever it is you do, and I’m getting more parts for my babies,” Hitoshi had to stop and remind himself what she meant by that, “and I thought I’d walk with you, and boy am I glad I did, that jerk said some awful stuff to Shinso.”

Hitoshi sighed as the now trio kept walking to the factory, “it’s fine Hatsume, I don’t like it either, but, well I can’t exactly afford to get in trouble.”

“Well that’s just bullshit!” She exclaimed, “why would you get in trouble for defending yourself?”

“Because my quirk is evil and everyone hates me,” he deadpanned.

“That’s even dumber! What is your quirk anyways? That kid said mind control, right?”

He had to pause and blink at her for a second, “someone has to have told you about me, I’m kind of the bogeyman around here.”

She just laughed and shrugged, “eh, I don’t talk to a lot of people, even if people *did* want to hang out with me, I’d prefer working on my babies.”

“People don’t want to hang out with you?” Izuku asked, and Hitoshi was very glad that adding the words ‘they asked if’ in front of a sentence could nullify his quirk.

Hatsume nodded, “yeah, I mean, my mama says I just get too excited sometimes, and people don’t like that. Oh well, their loss.” Hitoshi couldn’t help but let out a snort at that, yeah, people could be assholes, well, he didn’t exactly think she was the easiest person to deal with either, but he thought people in general were a hassle, there was no reason Hatsume wouldn’t have some fellow engineer nerds to hang out with.

“Maybe it has something to do with the explosions,” he remarked, intending to try and piss her off a bit, but she just grinned.

“Like I said, if they can’t handle me then good riddance!” And honestly? He could admire that kind of attitude.

Izuku seemed to be thinking for a moment, they then turned to Hitoshi, a gleam in their eyes, “Shinso, do you want to invite her to watch our training session?”

Hitoshi blinked, realising that they were almost at the factory, he glanced at Hatsume, he supposed she wasn’t all that bad, she hadn’t run away the moment someone mentioned what he could do, and she seemed like she was in the same boat as him socially. He eventually nodded, “hey Hatsume! Izuku wants to invite you to hang out with us.”

Her eyes lit up, “oh really?” She grinned, “does that mean I get to know what secret stuff you two are doing?”

Izuku giggled and nodded, gesturing for her to follow as they and Hitoshi ducked into the side path that would lead them to the storage units. Hatsume’s eyes scanned every bit of machinery they passed by with a curious look that he’d only ever seen on Izuku before, when they were staring at him that day at the park or, to a lesser extent, writing in their notebooks. But they were mostly silent as they squeezed behind the wall of the factory and were greeted with the side-door to the old storage unit. Izuku quickly pushed open the rusty thing, beckoning the other two inside.

As soon as Hatsume stepped into the space, she immediately began rummaging around in some of the open boxes, before quickly moving on to generally exploring the space. Hitoshi just sighed and put his backpack down where he usually did and stepping into the makeshift training space. At some point, Izuku had found some old padding of some kind and put that all over the floor, just to help lessen the risk of injury when they did dodging practice.

Hatsume was busy digging through whatever metal scrap was in those boxes, “so what *do* you two do here?”

“Oh, that, Izuku’s teaching me how to fight,” Hitoshi said, going through the stretches Izuku had drilled into his head before settling into what they’d called a half-decent defensive stance.

“Really!?” She asked, eyes lighting up again as she looked up at him, “they can fight?”

Hitoshi nodded, a shaky movement followed by a yelp as he was quickly distracted by the green blur lunging at him, he managed to dodge the first few hits, then another as he started counting the seconds in his head. And then, just when he thought he’d beat his previous record, he got pinned with his face to the ground and a knee pressing into his back. He quietly grumbled as Izuku stood up, quickly jumping back as he slowly began to get to his feet, shaking his arms before the routine started all over again.

Although this time, they seemed to have some running commentary from Hatsume as she started calling out their actions like she was a sports announcer, it wasn’t helping his concentration in the slightest, but Izuku seemed completely unaffected because *of course* they were. The constant talking made him get pinned several more times than he normally would, and he was starting to get a little annoyed about it.

Eventually, when Izuku called a break, Hatsume bounced up to him as he was munching on the granola bar he’d brought, “that was incredible!”

“I think you mean Izuku was incredible,” he muttered, “I was just getting my ass kicked.”

Hatsume frowned, “well, I don’t think *most* people would survive that long against whatever the heck they were doing, I mean, did you see how they were zipping around!? I could barely keep track!”

Hitoshi paused at that, looking at her for a moment, he supposed she

was right, *he* hadn't been able to keep up with them a few weeks ago, and now he could, that surely counted for something. Then, after another pause, he turned back to his snack, muttering a quiet, "thanks."

She just grinned at him before going back to her scavenging. Izuku peered over her shoulder when she got closer to them, humming quietly before signing, "what are you looking for?"

Hitoshi cleared his throat and relayed the question, ignoring the slight spike in anxiety as he felt the 'what' leave his lips, he'd taken caution to make sure it didn't count as *his* question, it would be fine.

Mei looked up from her work upon hearing Shinso's words, turning to Izuku to answer, "oh, I'm looking for a commutator, I know it's old fashioned, but I found a broken motor the other day that needs one of those bad boys to fix it up so I can use it in one of my babies!" She knew this factory used to make all sorts of machines back when it was running, and it was in the right range of old that a working commutator might be in here somewhere.

They hummed and also began rummaging around in a different box, Mei looked at them oddly before shrugging and going back to her own work, whatever they were doing they could do, she had some parts to find!

After a few minutes of unsuccessful searching, she felt a tap on her shoulder, and she looked up to see Izuku holding a commutator in their hands, and it looked to be in fairly good condition too, despite a bit of rust, but she could clean that off easily. But there was something more surprising than the fact that they'd found one, "you knew what I was talking about?" She asked as she took the part and put it in her bag.

They smiled and signed something, to which Shinso translated, sounding rather incredulous, "they said that one of their relatives does mechanical engineering."

Mei gasped, "really!? What field does your relative work in?" She asked, now buzzing with curiosity.

Izuku shrugged, and signed something else, which Shinso relayed, saying "apparently they can't say, but that's how they know about this stuff."

Mei frowned, well, that was kind of a bummer, she was hoping to

learn about a professional, maybe someone who could be her colleague one day! Ma always said that networking was important to do as soon as you could, especially if she was going to do quirk support gear like she wanted to, it was a field mostly dominated by a few big companies, unless you wanted to work with heroes specifically, in which case you had to compete with several dozen other specialists. Whichever one she picked, having friends in *any* mechanical engineering field was a good idea for her future.

But before she could pry into it more, Izuku suddenly dragged Shinso back to the training area, this time trying to get him to hit them. Mei debated going back to her searching, but she'd found what she was looking for, and this seemed interesting, so she watched as Shinso tried and failed to land even a single blow on Izuku's erratic form, but they still looked happy with him, so she supposed it wasn't a bad thing. Well, like she'd told him earlier, Izuku seemed to be an incredible fighter for their age, they could probably hold their own for a bit against a decently trained adult.

She thought back to the kid that yelled at Shinso, he hadn't seemed to hear it, but they'd called him an evil monster who deserved to...

Well, she wasn't going to let that slide, so when Izuku and her scared the kid away, she'd felt a weird sense of vindication at the coward's hissing and calling her and Izuku 'guard dogs.' Mama told her once that cowards picked on people only when they knew they could get away with it, and as far as she could tell, Shinso couldn't do anything without getting in trouble himself. She sighed, if only she didn't do online school, she could have gone with him every day to keep those jerks away. It just wasn't fair.

She stared at the pair still training fiercely, she had fun being here, they were, more welcoming, than she'd ever expected them to be, and it had been a long time since other kids had willingly stuck around, or invited her anywhere, maybe she'd try and befriend these two, maybe it would go better than it usually did.

Chapter End Notes

Mei has been added to the team.

Hitoshi officially has scary dog privilege.

Chapter 83: Trial and Error.

Chapter Summary

Mei tests out her latest baby.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku skipped along the rooftops towards their destination, pausing when they reached the factory only to make extra sure they didn't fall on the frankly precarious buildings as they dashed past. They quickly began searching, knowing that there was no way they'd have to go further than ten minutes past the factory before. *There!* Their eyes darted about until they locked onto the people they were looking for, shockingly easy to spot despite the slight crowd going on, they'd have to work on that.

Shinso was skulking down the street with Hatsume bouncing after him. Izuku paused, waiting for the pair to pass them before beginning to follow silently, counting the seconds in their mind as they assessed the situation. They tilted their head, Hatsume's duffle bag seemed to be full, odd, she normally followed them to gather things for her 'babies,' but this time, she was bringing something. Something heavy if the number of times she kept having to readjust it to keep the bag from sliding off her shoulder was any indication.

About three minutes passed until Shinso suddenly froze, glancing around, it took him thirty more seconds to finally look up to the rooftops, at which point he sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose half in amusement and half in irritation. Hatsume just grinned and waved hello, scrambling when the action almost made her drop her bag, she checked it over with a care that seemed unusual.

Izuku giggled, waving back at Hatsume before leaping down a trail of the nearest windowsills and landing next to the pair, "two minutes and thirty seconds, that's about a minute better than last time!" They signed as they fell into step with the pair and headed back towards the factory. They'd taken to doing this regularly, not all the time obviously, but often enough to keep Shinso on his toes. If he wasn't going to practice situational awareness without them prompting him,

then he'd have to deal with them using their dad's teaching method of letting his students fuck around and find out, in other words, hide in plain sight until they notice that you've been there the whole time.

Overall, it seemed to be doing wonders for Shinso's skills, he'd even improved in training thanks to Hatsume providing a neat distraction for him to work around in the form of her rambling about support gear. In fact, Izuku had an idea they wanted to try today, if she was willing to cooperate, and if their hunch of what she had in that bag was correct, it would be the perfect time to bring it up.

As they walked the few minutes towards the factory, Izuku noticed with no small amount of sadistic glee that a *certain* group of people, aka Shinso's old bullies, had started giving the trio a wide berth and throwing wary glances at Izuku and Hatsume. Was it right to get joy from their fear? Probably not. But the fact that the two of them had managed to successfully intimidate a bunch of other teenagers from tormenting Shinso, at least on the weekends, was definitely something to smile about. And the taunts calling them a 'guard dog' didn't bother them in the slightest. After all, being a guard god just meant protecting the people you cared about so fiercely that others hated you for it, many people in their family had earned that nickname in their own childhoods, so really, as far as Izuku was concerned, it was a compliment.

They ducked as Hatsume leaned over them to playfully punch Shinso in the shoulder, "c'mon, just tell me what you think? It's great right?"

Shinso grumbled something under his breath that sounded suspiciously like a veiled complement before he glared at her, "it's insane is what it is."

Izuku smiled, Hatsume had been chattering about her latest idea, a pair of boots that had propulsion technology inside them, allowing the user to fly around for short periods of time, "what are you talking about Shinso? It could work!"

He just huffed, "yeah, but nobody's going to be nuts enough to test drive something like that."

"I don't need someone else!" Hatsume frowned, "I'd be doing it myself!"

That just caused Shinso to snort in amusement, "yeah, let me know how you deal with the broken bones afterwards."

“I take precautions you know!”

“Could’ve fooled me, I swear I’ve heard at least five explosions this week.”

Hatsume crossed her arms indignantly, “it’s part of the process! I can’t improve if I don’t fail first!”

Izuku giggled, keeping their focus on their surroundings while their friends got absorbed in the argument that wouldn’t really go anywhere because neither of them were going to back down in the slightest. Izuku quietly tugged on Hatsume’s glove when they approached the factory, pausing her rambling on why exactly the mechanics of hover-boots could totally work, allowing the trio to duck behind the building and into their storage unit.

Shinso barely got to set down his bag before Izuku started the training, but he dodged easily now, and Izuku could tell he was starting to get more confident in his abilities, hopefully he didn’t get too cocky or they were gonna have to knock him down a peg. But training went about as well as usual, with Shinso getting pinned every few minutes, though for some reason, they were lacking Hatsume’s usual talkativeness, which Shinso had definitely noticed seeing as he grinned partway through while ducking under one of Izuku’s punches and dashing past them.

After they caught up to him, they threw a few punches, a kick, and then they glanced to the left for a moment longer than they normally would, telegraphing a feint that caused him to dodge back and get tackled when the action caused him to unwittingly corner himself. At least he didn’t slide right this time, he must have caught onto the fact that such an obvious read was clearly a trap, unfortunately he also seemed to have forgotten just how much space was needed to make the kind of dodging move he was trying to pull off.

Izuku giggled as they helped him up, following him off the training area to grab some water, “you’re doing better, but again, you need to think about what’s going to happen if you make certain moves.”

Shinso grumbled, “I’ve seen you get out of corners like that, I thought I could manage.”

“That was by dodging *under* the guy! You tried to dodge to my *side*, of course you got caught!”

Izuku hopped onto one of the boxes, glancing at Hatsume who was

fiddling with a ball of scrap about the size of her palm, Shinso peered over their shoulder, also staring at the thing that, for some reason, Hatsume was taking apart.

Shinso cleared his throat, catching her attention, she turned to the two of them, flipping up her goggles that Izuku had finally learned were supposed to turn her quirk, Zoom, from telescopic to magnifying, “oh, didn’t see you there, curious about my newest baby?” She asked, showing off the ball that, now that Izuku looked closer, was actually comprised of several panels screwed together, though that was easier to understand with half the panels laying on the box beside Hatsume.

“Uh,” Shinso looked between the ball and Hatsume, “well, Izuku wanted to know what you were making!”

Izuku gave him a sidelong glance, fine, if he wanted to play it like that they weren’t going to call him out, but they *would* let him know that he wasn’t nearly as slick as he thought he was being. He just gave them a tight-lipped smile that screamed ‘stop that, don’t embarrass me.’

Hatsume’s eyes lit up, either oblivious to Shinso’s obvious misdirection or humouring him, but most likely just excited to talk about her baby. “Well, you know how smoke bombs, glitter bombs, and stuff like that are usually one-use things? Like, the casing just won’t hold anything anymore? Well!” She held up the ball, turning it so that the other two could see the inside, and while Izuku wasn’t good at recognizing parts on sight like Bibi Higari, but they were fairly sure that was a fan of some kind, though it looked more like the blades at the bottom of a blender. “I thought I’d make a baby that could break apart and release whatever was stored inside like a normal stuff-bomb, but then you’d be able to put it back together and refill it again!”

Izuku’s eyes widened, that seemed, well, maybe about the same amount of useful in battle, but definitely more resource efficient; though, surely *pressure* would make a better dispersal mechanism than a fan like that? “So you’re working on that now?”

Shinso translated and Hatsume nodded, “yeah, it’s supposed to be able to disperse small particles, though I’m having trouble getting the release mechanism not to be too easy so that it doesn’t fall apart mid throw.”

“And I guess I should be thankful that probably can’t explode,” Shinso

muttered, to which Hatsume laughed.

“I mean, it’s technically *supposed* to, I just can’t test it in the apartment because, well, we try not to drop stuff on the ground ‘cause of my ma,” she shook her head, “so I haven’t actually gotten to test it out yet.”

Izuku looked over at the open space that was the training area, it wouldn’t be *that* hard to clean, “you could test it here!”

Shinso’s eyes lit up a bit, he was definitely more interested in this than he’d admit, “yeah! Izuku’s right! You *could* test it here!”

Hatsume tilted her head, “are you sure, you two wouldn’t be able to train while I do the testing.”

Izuku shrugged and gestured to the fact that they and Shinso were seated on some boxes, and he seemed to get the sentiment, “we can wait a bit, this is our breaktime after all, you could test it while we’re resting.”

Hatsume grinned, “sure, I don’t have to do the dispersal test immediately anyway! Let me just,” she put the ball back together at a speed that said she’d done this a hundred times before, and then scurried to the centre of the training area and tossed it as hard as she could, causing it to bounce upon landing on the mats, but unfortunately not breaking open. She huffed in frustration and picked it up, muttering about too much friction as she pulled the screwdriver from her pocket and loosened something, then trying again. This time, the ball fell apart mid-flight, breaking into three equal pieces that, from the brief glance that Izuku got, seemed to be connected via interlocking bits, like a puzzle piece. Again, Hatsume huffed, adjusting whatever she was adjusting as she kept trying again and again until finally, the ball opened exactly as it hit the ground.

She let out an excited squeal as she clicked it back together and skipped back to the pair waiting on the bench, “It works!” She exclaimed, “my baby works!”

Izuku hummed, narrowing their eyes before signing, “aren’t you supposed to do that with different variables, to make sure it’s a consistent result?”

Hatsume chuckled, “well duh, but it’s a proof of concept! And it works! I can do proper testing next time!”

Shinso held out his hand silently, when met with a look of confusion he just said, “I wouldn’t be able to throw it as strongly as you, I’m pretty sure that counts as changing a variable.”

Hatsume shrugged, “not exactly a controlled change,” she muttered, turning the ball in her hands as if she could figure out a better way to test it before going, “oh what the hell, go for it! Worst that happens is it doesn’t work!”

Shinso chuckled, “yeah, I, uh, definitely wouldn’t be offering if this was full of something.” He stood in roughly the same spot that Hatsume was earlier as he tossed the ball, and as expected, it didn’t break on impact.

“Damn it!” Hatsume yelled as she rushed to her baby, physically forcing open the interlocking mechanism and beginning to fiddle with it again.

Izuku watched for a moment, before remembering a piece of advice Bibi Higari once gave to one of xyr students, they whistled sharply, catching everyone’s attention, “Hatsume! Just keep it calibrated to yourself! It’s always better to make sure the whole thing works one way before you go messing with it to try and make it work for different situations.”

Shinso translated it, before turning to Izuku, “I guess that’s your engineer relative’s advice?”

Izuku nodded, scampering up to the pair and staring at the ball, “yep! Xe also says that ‘first drafts exist for one reason, and that is to make sure your invention works, everything else comes later.’”

After translating, Hatsume laughed, “yeah, my mama says something similar,” she then made her voice a bit deeper, presumably trying to mimic her mama, “first drafts are for proving your theories, the rest are for making it practical.”

Izuku giggled, as Shinso tilted his head with a tiny smile, “it must be common knowledge among professionals then.”

Hatsume shrugged, “no idea, but probably, whatever it is, it’s good advice,” she said as she pocketed her baby, “you two can get back to training, I’ll be fine tuning this.”

“Wait!” Izuku signed, hoping the franticness would make her pause, “I’ve noticed you talk when you’re working, why’d you stop?”

Hatsume sighed, “I thought it was distracting you two?”

“No no, keep doing that,” Izuku grinned, “I was thinking of asking Shinso to try and listen to what you’re saying while he fights me.”

To Shinso’s credit, he translated the sentence fully before rounding on Izuku with, “you little bastard! I swear you’re trying to *torture* me!!”

Izuku burst into laughter “I’m not asking you to understand! Just, be able to recite a few words!”

Shinso just sputtered, “Hatsume! Don’t do this to me!”

Hatsume shook her head with a wild grin on her face, “sorry Shinso! I’m not disobeying the kid who can toss me into the ground!” They all knew full well that Izuku would have let her refuse.

“Evil, you’re both utterly horrible and evil!”

“Too bad!” Izuku giggled, matching the light-hearted tone, “better get punching if you don’t want to get thrown like a sack of potatoes!”

Shinso laughed as he got into a fighting stance, “oh shut up.”

Chapter End Notes

> Oops, I'm late.
>
> I forgot I had a doctor's appointment today and didn't prepare my chapter ahead of time lol. That also means this didn't get my usual once over so if there's any errors I'll probably go back to find and edit those out tomorrow morning.

Chapter 84: Ask.

Chapter Summary

Izuku ups the ante.

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch
Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku smiled as they wandered along, their legs hurrying as fast as possible so that they could see Shinso and Hatsume as quickly as possible. They weren't sure what had happened, but they were finding themself trying to interact with the pair even more than they had with any of the other kids their age, like Himiko, Shoto, and even Tenya. Okay that was a lie, they knew exactly why, and it was still the same reason they'd given their parents for not wanting them to get involved, Shinso and Hatsume were normal kids, well, as normal as their friends would ever get they supposed. Yeah, they loved their life, and they'd never want to go back to normal. No, they'd fought too hard to just give up on their dreams, and besides, they still had something to prove, even if it wasn't to themself or their family anymore. It was just that, well, Shoto and Tenya were heroes in training too, and Himiko was Granny Chiyo's assistant, and none of them had ever had anything close to a normal social life, so it was kinda fun talking to kids who did know what normal, or something close to that, was like.

A familiar stream of chatter interrupted their thoughts as they spotted Hatsume and Shinso just exiting their apartment building. Izuku gave a sharp whistle and waved them over, no surprise training today, they wanted Shinso to have his guard dropped.

"Izuku!!!" Hatsume sprinted up to them, pulling them into a hug which was quickly reciprocated, "you are *not* going to believe what I saw last night!"

Shinso just sighed and shook his head, "she's been talking about it since I saw her."

Izuku giggled, so *that* was what the random 'kill me now' text they got from him was for, "so what is it?"

Hatsume's eyes lit up, "oh, okay, I think I understood that!" She grinned, and Izuku tilted their head in question, to which she answered, "oh, I asked Shinso to teach me some JSL, you know, so that he doesn't have to translate for you all the time!"

Izuku smiled, "aww, thanks"

"No need to thank me!" Hatsume shook her head, "kinda the bare minimum really, at least, that's what my ma says."

"Your parents know you're friends with us then," Shinso said.

"Eh, kinda?" Hatsume shrugged, "they know I've got some friends I met while digging around the factory. Doesn't your dad know about Izuku?"

Shinso winced, "well, yes, he knows about them, but not so much about the training, he, kinda thinks I've picked up a hobby of running."

Hatsume frowned at that, "why don't you tell him? He'd be glad that his son isn't going to get pushed around anymore, right?"

"He's got enough to worry about without knowing that I get bullied," Shinso seemed to shrink in on himself.

Hatsume opened her mouth to argue but Izuku put a hand on her shoulder, shaking their head, they'd tried to talk sense into him before, but he was stubborn, and it really wasn't worth the battle. Instead, Hatsume just pivoted to the experience she had, "okay, so, last night, I was testing one of my babies, right? It's nothing too special, just a prototype for some kind of hidden compartment mechanism. So I was doing that, and then while I'm working, I notice there's this bright light nearby, and I see someone running across the rooftops and suddenly stop and double over laughing! And then someone else, who I think was a hero, 'cause they handcuffed the first person and had a weird costume on. But, get this, I've never seen a hero like that before, and I like to keep track you know, 'cause if I'm gonna do support gear I've gotta know my customer base, so I think that's some kind of, secret hero!"

Izuku hoped the flash of recognition didn't show on their face, that would be Ms Joke, another undergrounder and one of their dad's, well, friends would be pushing it, but friendly co-workers, so Hatsume really wasn't off when she said 'secret hero' but they weren't going to let her know that. Instead they just hummed along, thanking every

power of the universe that they were good enough at acting that they could be confident in fooling their new friends.

“Couldn’t this have been a text or something?” Shinso huffed, clearly having heard this several times before, but, if Izuku wasn’t mistaken, his eyes seemed brighter than normal, they wondered what that was about, and also felt slightly bad that they were about to crush whatever good mood he was in.

“Well it *would* have been,” Hatsume said, “but I don’t have either of your numbers, so...”

Izuku and Shinso looked at each other with an expression of ‘oh.’ Izuku quickly held out their hand and Hatsume grinned, handing her phone over as they put their and Shinso’s numbers in. Meanwhile Shinso chuckled, “man, I can’t believe we forgot to do that.”

Hatsume laughed as well, “I mean it is kinda weird, don’t you two talk over the phone at all?”

Shinso shook his head as Izuku handed the phone back, “not really, we just text meetup times, and, I mean, phone calls are kinda useless to us.”

Hatsume tilted her head at that, before looking at Izuku and realizing, “oh, right.”

Izuku giggled at that, leading the other two down the alley and into the storage unit as they set their backpack down on the counter, passing a little note to Hatsume before hopping to the middle and going through some stretches. Shinso looked at them oddly, before hesitantly going through the same, he was probably wondering why they were doing a warmup now since they didn’t used to. They grinned to themself, time for some fun.

“Shinso! Try and hit me!” They signed, as they mentally apologized for what they were about to make him do, but he needed this.

“Uh, we’re doing this first today I guess.” He looked befuddled as he glanced at Hatsume, who just shrugged.

“I dunno, but,” she held out the note, “apparently I’m not gonna be talking this time?”

Shinso looked even more confused at that, “o-kay then,” he muttered, dropping into a fighting stance, good timing as usual, before

launching a punch at Izuku, fast, precise.

Hitoshi wasn't even sure what had happened in that second, because suddenly he was on his back with a knee pressed into his chest and his arms pinned beside him. He coughed in a weak attempt to regain some of the breath that had been knocked from his chest as he stared up at Izuku, who was pinning him with a strength he didn't know they possessed.

"Uh..."

Izuku giggled, hopping out of reach as they allowed Hitoshi to get back to his feet, "okay," he muttered, looking at Izuku with a certain apprehensiveness, they'd never done that before, and now he was starting to get worried, "that's, that was different."

"Well, since you've improved so fast," they gave him a feral grin, clearly holding back laughter at the shudder that ran through him, "I thought we could do some proper sparring now, you know, no holding back!"

Hitoshi's expression dropped as a horrified look crossed his face, "you were holding back." The realisation hit him like a bag of bricks as he just started at them, and then over at Hatsume, who was suddenly *very* interested in their training instead of the blueprints she'd brought with her.

"Of course I have, I didn't want to just kick your ass over and over, you weren't confident enough for that kind of hit to your ego!" They bounced on their heels, not an impatient gesture anymore, now a preparedness, a sign that they were ready to bolt at a moment's notice. And that was when Hitoshi realised one thing about today's training.

He was *screwed*.

Hitoshi tried his best to dodge the sudden green blur barrelling at him, but ended up getting knocked flat on his ass yet again. It almost felt like his first day of training all over again as he tried desperately to dodge Izuku, and yet, this time, there was an element of fear to it as he used everything he'd learned to barely escape.

He realised at some point that he was probably expected to try and hit *back* at them somehow, which was kind of terrifying considering he was pretty sure they could toss him across the room. He glanced around as he ran, frantically trying to recall what kind of advice

they'd given him about actual fights. First thing's first, always be aware of your surroundings, well, he certainly had that covered, considering the little demon that was currently chasing him, pinning him frequently before letting him get up to keep going. He wondered briefly if this is what it felt like to be hunted for sport.

After a while, he decided to bite the bullet and tried punching them back, only for the result to be the same as last time, though now that he was expecting it, he realised they'd dodged *under him and threw him over their shoulder. He landed with a thud as he tried to catch his breath.*

He managed to scramble to his feet in time to avoid a light kick, but he was definitely going to be exhausted if this kept up. He glanced at Izuku, who was grinning, the sadistic little bastard was *waiting* for him to start running. He huffed, "okay, I assume there's a win condition here." He stated, though frankly he had no idea, he just needed to know what the hell they wanted from him.

"I'll stop the training if you pin me," they answered, to which Hitoshi's mind reeled. He had to pin *them*!? How the hell was he supposed to lay a finger on them let alone *pin* them!?

He glanced at Hatsume, a pleading look in his eyes, but she shrugged and said, "I'm not the trainer here."

Hitoshi grumbled and yelped as apparently Izuku got tired of waiting and lunged at him, starting the chase all over again as he tried desperately to avoid them. He was left scrambling continuously as he tried again and again, only to be bested, it wasn't his fault that they were stronger and faster and logically, would beat him in every kind of fight they could possibly set up.

At some point, they thankfully allowed him to take a break before his legs gave out under him, and he flopped onto one of the boxes, uncaring of how stiff it was, he just needed to rest. Izuku nudged his water bottle at him, and he gave them a half-hearted glare for the shit they were putting him through as he took it and drained about half of it. He heard Hatsume giggling nearby and he sent her a glare as well, which was about as effective as it was with Izuku, which is to say, it wasn't in the slightest.

As soon as he wasn't gasping for air, he turned to Izuku, "you seem awfully confident that I can win against you."

Izuku just laughed, giggling so loudly and uncontrollably that Hitoshi was worried he'd said something weird, but when they collected

themself, they shook their head and gave him a grin, “yeah, for you of all people it should be easy as pie!”

Hitoshi just stared at them with a confused expression, what the fuck did *that* mean!? But before he could figure it out, it was back onto the mats for him and the hell of being chased after by someone as frenetic as a bat out of hell.

He tried and failed again and again to pin them, but to no avail as they just kept dodging or counterattacking, all while not giving him any room to think as they kept the pressure to keep running. What did they want from him!?

During the few moments when he managed to gain a lead, he tried to figure it out, they wanted him to pin them, which was probably impossible. But they seemed to think he could manage it! Why on earth would they think that?

Hitoshi leapt over one of the boxes, looping behind and back onto the mats in an attempt to get some breathing room.

They’d also laughed at him when he pointed out the impossibility, saying that for him *of all people* it would be easy.

He couldn’t figure out what that meant, what did he have that was uniquely suited to winning fights? Was it just because he’d trained with them for so long?

Izuku pinned him again, and he dashed off the moment they loosened their grip.

No, they wouldn’t say it like that if it was just a matter of training. So what did Hitoshi have that was completely unique to him, out of everyone else in the world?

They pinned him again, and he grabbed their arm in a desperate attempt to fight back, but that just caused them to let go, and instead of being irritated, they had an approving look in their eyes quickly overshadowed by something that could only be described as being a wayward step away from bloodlust.

Right, they wanted him to not play fair, attacking even though they’d already pinned him was fine. He was supposed to use every advantage he had, but what more could he do that he hadn’t tried a dozen times already?

He stumbled backwards accidentally knocking Izuku's notebook off of the box it was on, he glanced at it as the chase was paused so that Izuku could put it somewhere safer. It was their notebook on quirks, not that he'd ever be able to read what he learned was a code of some kind. In Izuku's own words they liked to figure out quirks because those made people special.

Oh.

Hitoshi's eyes widened as he began to fit the puzzle pieces together, unable to fully form the thought before Izuku was back on him like a hound. But, he had enough of a picture to realise the truth.

They wanted him to use his quirk on them.

It *would* make the fight 'easy as pie,' after all, the moment they were under his control he could just walk over and pin them without a fuss. But on the other hand, that, would mean using his quirk on them. Sure, he'd done it once at the park, but he'd only done it for a second, not enough time to pin someone, and, the way his quirk felt on other people, it was horrible according to an old classmate of his, people just became puppets on strings, without any control over their bodies no matter what they did. He didn't want to do that, he, he didn't want to get hurt for it.

But, a small voice in his head whispered, this was *Izuku*, they wouldn't do anything to him, they wouldn't hurt him, they *wanted* this.

So, with his heart beating faster, he turned and called out to them with what little breath he could spare in a voice that wavered and wobbled showing the terror he felt as the words left his lips, "hey Izuku! What's the goal again?"

Izuku grinned sharply, *"you have to win."*

And just like that, their eyes went blank, their hands dropped, and Hitoshi felt the connection pull at the back of his mind.

He stood still for a moment, panting as he caught his breath, and staring at Izuku's frozen body. He glanced over at Hatsume, whose eyebrows had shot up upon seeing his quirk in action for the first time. "Woah, *that's* what it does!?" She exclaimed.

Hitoshi nodded, his mouth feeling like it was glued shut as he shakily approached Izuku and pushed them to the floor, pinning them the same way they'd pinned him hundreds of times before.

“Wake up.”

As soon as the command left his mouth, spat out like it was poison, he watched as the green returned to Izuku’s eyes, shining in bright admiration, Hitoshi felt sick, he didn’t deserve that kind of look for what he just did.

They must have noticed the way his hands were shaking, because they caught him as he collapsed forward, tears in his eyes as he screwed them shut.

Instantly, he was lifted off the ground and held tight as Izuku made their way somewhere.

He felt a solid surface underneath him and heard some shuffling and the sound of someone dropping to the floor as another pair of arms joined Izuku’s in this odd impromptu hug.

He blinked and looked over his shoulder at Hatsume, who looked scared as she took in the state of him, “Shinso, are you alright?” She asked, tightening her grip.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered, “I’m sorry.”

A hand, he couldn’t tell whose, carded through his hair as Hatsume made eye contact with Izuku, they must have communicated something because she just sighed, “they want you to know that they’re fine, and that you did exactly what they wanted you to do.” She said, pressing herself closer as if trying to act like a weighted blanket.

Hitoshi sniffled and shuffled a bit so that he could see both of his friends at once, “I know, I, I just,” he looked away, “I haven’t used it like that in a long time and it kinda freaks me out,” he admitted.

Izuku moved their arms so that they were free to sign, “I’m sorry,” they sighed, “I just wanted you to use it without feeling bad about it, I mean, I was asking, so I thought, you wouldn’t feel as guilty about it.”

Hitoshi sighed, “it’s fine, you’re right, it didn’t feel *as* awful as it could have,” he sat up, leaning back against one of the boxes, “I just, for a long time now, I’ve been avoiding using my quirk because, well the last time I used it to stop a fight nearly killed me.”

Izuku felt *really* bad about what they did now, “oh,” was all they could offer in condolence without allowing the rage slowly boiling up to

flow out.

Hatsume, meanwhile, looked *furious*, “what!?” She hissed, “who the fuck was it, I’ll go kick their ass myself,” she looked like she wanted to murder someone, and frankly so did Izuku.

Shinso smiled at her, “you’re a bit late to the party on that one Hatsume, mum’s in jail for what she did.”

Izuku gasped and, tentatively because they didn’t want to force him, they signed, “you don’t have to answer, but, your own mother?”

He sighed, “yeah, to cut a long story short, she was fighting with my dad about, *something*, I dunno, I was six and way too young to understand what the hell was going on, it was, like, two years since my quirk had come in. I think she didn’t like it from the moment we figured out what it was.”

Izuku couldn’t help the rage they felt as they leaned against the same box as Shinso, wrapping their arms around him in comfort. Hatsume quickly shuffled to his other side, leaning against him.

He smiled gratefully at the two of them as he continued, “she tried to slap dad, I asked her why she was doing it, and, I thought I was doing something good, I put my quirk into the question and got her to back off. And then, the moment I released it,” Shinso shuddered, bringing his knees to his chest, “she turned on me.”

Hatsume let out a quiet growl at that, “bitch.”

Shinso laughed, “yeah, she was, it was the middle of the night, but she was petty enough to drag me by the hair and tried to drown me in the nearby river, this was back when we lived in Esuha so there were a few around.”

Izuku carefully let out a shaky breath, willing themself not to show the rage they were feeling on their face, that was the *last* thing Shinso needed right now, and besides, Hatsume seemed to have the righteous anger covered.

“Yeah, so, that’s why my dad’s the one raising me,” Shinso sighed, relaxing into the hug a bit as he trailed off.

“You sound awfully casual about that,” Hatsume noted.

Shinso chuckled, “yeah, well, it’s not that bad of a memory for me,

‘cause that’s when I stopped thinking about my quirk as a curse.”

Izuku and Hatsume shared a look, “what?” She asked.

“Yeah, before my mum could actually throw me in the river, she was stopped by a hero, I guess the neighbours must have reported a disturbance or something.”

“Wait, which hero!?” Hatsume asked, now facing him and leaning even closer.

“I don’t know,” Shinso admitted, “I’ve never seen a hero like that ever again, and I never got their name,” he huffed, “I’ve searched *everywhere* and nobody has an answer for me.”

“Well, tell us anyways! Maybe we’ll find them sometime!” Hatsume looked at him expectantly, and Izuku nodded, they’d like to hear what happened, but it was sounding like Shinso had encountered an underground hero, and they didn’t hold out hope for recognising whoever it was.

Shinso’s eyes lit up with hope, though he tried to play it cool. “Well, they immobilised my mum with this grey scarf thing they had around their neck, asking what the hell she thought she was doing, and then when she yelled at them and called me a monster. They got up in her face, pulling me away from her and handing me to my dad as they said, in like the calmest scary voice I’ve ever heard, ‘that’s a *child,* the only monster I see here is *you,*’ and they turned to me and said, ‘don’t listen to people like that kid, they’re idiots,’ and that was when I kinda realised that maybe I wasn’t broken, ‘cause if a hero was saving me, was saying I wasn’t a monster, then, maybe I wasn’t.” He sighed, and Hatsume looked enthralled, but Izuku barely managed to focus on the story past those first few words.

A grey scarf.

That was their dad.

Shinso had met *their dad.*

Izuku did some quick maths, and it would have been back when Dad was a rookie hero, working wherever he was assigned to, though how he ended up in Esuha was a bit of a mystery. They wondered if they could ask him, if he even remembered after so long, rescues tended to blend together into just, *work stuff* after some time, they knew that from experience.

After a moment of silence, Shinso coughed conspicuously, “anyway, that’s why I don’t like asking questions anymore, better safe than sorry.”

“Well,” Hatsume said, “I think, if you asked me a question, I wouldn’t get mad at you, even if it *was* a mind control question.”

Shinso tilted his head at her, “um, o-okay-”

Hatsume shushed him, before continuing, “*and* I’m sure Izuku feels the same, so if you *did* want to drop that whole ‘asking questions without making them questions’ thing you’re doing, you could around us, right Izuku?”

Izuku nodded rapidly unable to sign anything due to their arms being occupied with the hug, but they tried to get their enthusiasm across despite their brain still very much being in the space of *‘what the fuck’* after that revelation.

Shinso looked at them for a moment before taking a deep breath, “if you’re sure you won’t mind.”

“We won’t.”

Izuku pulled their hands free just long enough to sign, “your quirk could stop you getting hurt, it would be good if you learned to use it, and besides,” they added, giving him a soft smile, “nobody deserves to be scared of their own quirk.”

Shinso smiled back, “thanks guys, you’re the best friends I’ve ever had.”

Hatsume hugged him tighter, “aww, thanks Shinso!” And then she giggled, “sorry, sorry, it’s just kinda weird calling you Shinso when we’re calling Izuku by their given name.”

Shinso huffed, “well that’s kind of all they gave us.”

“Still,” she said, “I wouldn’t mind if you two called me Mei, we *are* friends, and it feels less unfair.”

Shinso tilted his head, “well, if you’re both gonna use your given names I’m not gonna make you use my family one, call me Hitoshi.”

Izuku’s eyes brightened at that, hugging both of their friends tightly, causing dual yelps of surprise as the force of the hug made them fall

onto the floor. The three of them were silent for a moment before they all burst into laughter.

“Watch your strength Izuku!” Mei exclaimed, wriggling her way out from the bottom of the pile.

“Yeah! You don’t want to break our bones,” Hitoshi paused before smiling, “do you?”

Izuku giggled, helping him up, “no, I’d rather not.” It was good to have friends.

Chapter End Notes

Late again, *sigh* I'm starting to think I'm never going to be on time anymore thanks to college (whoever decided teachers could give two day deadlines for speech scripts is evil)

Anyways.

Hitoshi backstory!!

Chapter 85: Hitoshi has a bad time, meets some nice people.

Chapter Summary

Mei's parents enter the picture.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hitoshi yawned as he rolled out of bed, decidedly unexcited for the gruelling day of school ahead, he reached out to silence the alarm on his phone and internally winced at the time, shit, he must've set the wrong time. He also decided to ignore the number of text messages he had unread, the group chat was Mei's idea, and with a two out of three yes vote, Hitoshi now had to deal with his friends' midnight ramblings whenever he woke up in the morning. But he could check that later, now he had to get ready before his dad found out he'd slept in.

He peeked out of his room, checking where his dad was, huh, that was weird, it didn't sound like he was in the kitchen. Hitoshi frowned and shut the door, wondering to himself if something was wrong before shaking his head and hurriedly changing into his uniform, there was no point in catastrophizing when there could be a hundred reasonable reasons for Dad's absence. He wandered into the kitchen, noting the lack of food on the table and turning to the fridge, where a note had been lopsidedly stuck to the handle, probably in a rush. Hitoshi grabbed the note, reading it quietly.

Hey kiddo! I had to go to the library early today 'cause one of the girls got sick, the leftover takeout is still in the fridge, I'll be home on the usual time, have fun at school!

And there was a little cat doodled in the corner surrounded by sparkles, it looked utterly brainless with giant eyes and its tongue sticking out. Hitoshi scoffed quietly to himself, glaring at the cat, Dad knew he wouldn't have the heart to crumple up this one, *bastard.* He sighed and stuck the note back on the fridge as he rummaged around and found the leftovers his dad had mentioned, impatiently sticking them in the microwave and hurrying back to his room while the timer

went because he'd forgotten his bag. He snagged it from its place beside his bed and quickly stuffed his books and stationary inside.

The microwave began beeping as he managed to find his pencil case and throw it in the bag, he sighed, "yeah yeah I hear you!" He yelled into the kitchen as he hurried to free his food and shut off that incessant noise. He quickly shovelled down the rice, almost burning his tongue with how hot it was as he finished zipping up his school bag and throwing it over his shoulders before lacing up his shoes.

Finally, he managed to rush out the door and down the hallway without tripping over his own two feet and making a fool of himself, he had plenty of time for *that* when he had to talk to anyone in class today. As he rushed out of the apartment building, he noticed himself slipping into a state of constant alertness that had been getting easier and easier to subconsciously find himself in. If there was one thing he was grateful for from Izuku's arduous idea of training, it was the situational awareness they kept hammering into his head. It had come in handy a few times now, not only in avoiding people who wanted him dead, but also making sure none of his classmates could surprise him with their bullshit.

By the time he reached the school he was already tired, mostly just from his brain already going through whatever stupid scenarios he'd have to deal with. However, in a pleasant surprise, his day went pretty smoothly, nobody heckled at him, he wasn't singled out by the teachers, he still had to wear the dumb muzzle, but overall, one of the better ways this could have gone.

So of course, he should have suspected that things would go wrong just when he let his guard down. And just as he had left his muzzle in the locker and headed out of the building, something in the back of his mind told him that there was a person following him. He forcefully kept down the impulse to turn around, but he did glance around as if looking at the scenery, his eyes darting around, but there was a small crowd of students all heading home, and there was no way he'd be able to pick out one individual acting shady. So instead, he quietly pulled out his phone and opened the group chat.

Cryptid Activity

1:47 AM

safety hazard: *(`•–•́) okay but counter argument, beetles are cool.*

Hell spawn: *Hmmm, compelling. However, more evidence is required.*

safety hazard: *boombeetle.png (alt text: an image of a bombardier beetle on a leaf, it is mid spray)*

safety hazard: *that enough proof?*

Hell spawn: *Alright, you've sold me. We'll test it out next Sunday.*

safety hazard: ٩(ˆᗜˆ)۶

3:04 PM

Existential Dread: *Yo, any 1 here?*

It took nearly a minute for anyone to respond, and all that time, Hitoshi was certain whoever it was hadn't left him alone just yet. He still couldn't tell who it was, but he wasn't about to just show his hand and let this creep know that they'd been spotted. But finally, he heard a little ding and his eyes darted back to his phone screen.

safety hazard: *'sup toshi? you done with school?*

Existential Dread: *Ye, though I'm p sure I'm being stalked rn.*

Hell spawn: *What!? Do you need one of us to come get you?*

Existential Dread: *If u could.*

safety hazard: *give me like ten minutes (ง •̀_•́)ง*

Hell spawn: *Same.*

Existential Dread: *aren't u @ home?*

Hell spawn: *Never underestimate the power of parkour.*

Hitoshi smiled, putting his phone back in his pocket as he sped up his walking in the hopes of getting away from whoever this was. He thought he was fine but then he heard something snap behind him and he whipped around, scanning the crowd of people returning home from work and school. The direct road to the apartment building was a smaller street, and Hitoshi didn't quite feel like being shanked in an alleyway, so he stuck to the main road, even if it would take a few minutes longer, it wasn't like his dad would be home yet anyways. But as he looked around, his eyes narrowed in on one particular person who he knew wasn't supposed to be here, and who was closing the distance fast. Asano.

Fuck. Whatever she wanted from him wouldn't be good, at least the other two in the little team of assholes that constantly tormented him were kinda useless without Asano's brawn to back them up. But Asano didn't need her friends' smarts to do something like kick his ass and take his pocket money or some other dumb scheme she had concocted with that dumb brain of hers. He backed away quickly until suddenly she caught up to him and yanked him into an empty alleyway.

"Hello," he said, trying to act unaffected by the sudden manhandling.

Asano didn't respond, just shoving him to the ground, and Hitoshi definitely felt something twist weird as he hit the ground, sending a jolt of pain through his leg.

He bit his tongue but couldn't stop the whimper that escaped his lips as he rolled aside from the kick aimed at his ribs, he tried to scramble to his feet, but his ankle must have gotten messed up because he immediately fell back onto the asphalt. He glared at her and sneered as he grabbed her leg and pulled in an attempt to pull her down to his level, unfortunately he wasn't that strong yet, but it certainly destabilized her and caused her to stumble back in order to regain her footing.

Hitoshi glanced around for anything he could use to defend himself when he noticed a flash of pink round the corner, fiddling with something frantically. He looked Asano dead in the eye and grinned smugly.

"What?" She demanded, "what the hell're you smiling about villain?"

"Just your inevitable humiliation," Hitoshi replied as Mei tossed what he now recognized as one of her reusable bomb prototypes, and a burst of smoke clouded the alleyway.

Hitoshi felt himself be pulled up to his feet by silent hands, and when he struggled and hissed quietly at having to put weight on his ankle, he was effortlessly lifted into a fireman's carry with an almost imperceptible giggle that he instantly recognized as Izuku's. So he relaxed, allowing them to manoeuvre him out of danger as Asano turned on Mei and began yelling about the smoke. He almost panicked when he felt a pressure around him, meaning that Izuku was trying to squeeze behind the building with him over their shoulder, but he trusted that they wouldn't do something they didn't have full confidence in.

They quickly set him down against the wall and he noticed he had a decent view into the alley as the smoke quickly cleared. Mei grabbed her bomb parts and ran as Asano, dumbass that she was, gave pursuit without even looking back to check if he was still there. After a few moments, he let out

a sigh as he turned to Izuku, who immediately held out a hand, but he shook his head, "sorry, my ankle's busted."

They sighed and picked him up again, this time holding him securely in their arms, something that felt weird when he was used to that strength being used to toss him around during training. They adjusted their grip to make sure they weren't twisting his ankle further and carried him back out onto the street as Mei came running back, apparently having lost Asano.

Hitoshi couldn't say he didn't get a bit embarrassed at the stares the three of them were getting, he was half tempted to hide his face, but alas, he wasn't wearing his hoodie. So he just suffered in silence until they reached the apartment building. And that was when the panic set in.

He glanced at Izuku, "we don't have to tell my dad, do we?" He asked, grimacing.

They just gave him a sympathetic look which told him all he needed to know, but Mei grinned, "or!" She exclaimed, "we could tell my mums!"

Hitoshi didn't bother pointing out how Mei's mums would probably tell his dad anyways, "okay, well, we can head to my apartment either way, 'cause my dad won't be home for like, an hour."

"Toshi, buddy," Mei gave him a look, "we're getting my mums' help. Besides, they'll grill me anyways considering I just ran out without saying anything."

He grumbled, "fine." It wasn't like he had much of a choice in the matter seeing as Izuku still didn't seem to be keen to put him down and, on Mei's direction, climbed up the fire escape and up to the window adjoining Mei's apartment.

She opened the window and hopped in, holding her arms out for Izuku to hand Hitoshi over after which she set him down on a table. And at this point he was feeling rather like a sack of flour or similar object, but he supposed he'd have to endure the indignity for now.

He glanced around what he assumed was the living room, he said assumed because it looked far more like a workshop than any reasonable living space. There were a few tables, and clutter on every single elevated surface, though surprisingly, or not so surprisingly given Mei's odd insistence on clean floors, there was nothing on the ground. Everything from odd tools and random scraps to bundles of wires and more complete projects, mostly things that seemed to be household appliances, although there was the odd cell phone or unidentifiable thing around. Mei did say at some point that

her mothers were both mechanics, he supposed this was all stuff they'd been asked to repair.

Mei herself was rummaging around the clutter when a voice called out from one of the other rooms, "Mei! Is that you?"

Mei's posture stiffened, then relaxed, "yeah mama! Um, hope you and ma don't mind, I brought my friends!"

An older lady poked her head out of a doorway, glancing at Hitoshi, who was still on the table, and Izuku, who was already snooping around, "oh, hello children," she turned to her daughter, "Mei, is there a reason you're digging through the cabinets like that?"

Mei paused her rifling, sighing as she put some stuff back in order, "uh, Toshi sprained his ankle, where'd we put the first aid kit?"

Her mama looked at her, then at Hitoshi, then sighed, shaking her head as she opened a different cupboard and grabbed a first aid kit, moving over to Hitoshi, "so, you're Mei's friends?" She asked, before tilting her head, "the name's Hatsume Tomoko."

Hitoshi nodded, "Shinso Hitoshi, nice to meet you ma'am," Izuku tugged on his sleeve pointedly, "oh, and this is Izuku." They signed a greeting to the older Hatsume, but clearly she didn't know JSL. He glanced at her for a moment, she looked almost nothing like Mei, with straight black hair cut into a bob, brown eyes, and a longer face dotted with moles.

Still, she smiled at both of them as she put a bandage over the sprain, calling out over her shoulder, "Aya! Come out here!"

There was a quiet squeaking noise as a door opened and another woman leaned out of the doorway, flipping a welding mask up to show and annoyed expression, "damn it Tomoko, I'm in the middle of something !"

"Too bad! Mei brought her friends over!"

At that the other woman, presumably Mei's ma, glanced at the two other children in her living room, "oh, well why didn't you start with that?" She said, and she retreated back into the room for a moment before coming out, now free of the welding gear as she fixed the strands of her frizzy brown hair that had escaped their bun. Though that wasn't what Hitoshi was looking at, that would be the wheelchair she was in, she must have noticed him staring because she laughed, "what? Never seen one of these before kiddo?"

Hitoshi squeaked, “w-well, no, I mean, not, up close at least, I just, um, sorry!”

The lady just laughed, “you’re fine, I’m just messin’ with ya!” She rolled up to the table and held out her hand, “Hatsume Aya, nice to meetcha!”

Mei piped up, finally having finished putting back what she’d disorganized, “yep! That’s Hitoshi and Izuku!”

“Shinso, actually,” he glared at Mei for a moment before shaking the outstretched hand.

“And that one?” Hatsume Aya gestured at Izuku.

Hitoshi and Mei shared a several second look, “uhh,” Mei began sheepishly, “we, don’t know, I mean, they introduced themself as just Izuku, and they’re not gonna tell us.”

Izuku grinned and shook hands with Hatsume Aya before scurrying off to the side to drag Mei over to be closer to Hitoshi, which he appreciated considering he’d never met either of these women before. But Hatrsume Aya turned to him, “Shinso, huh, where have I heard that name before?”

Hitoshi cringed, about to deny it, but Mei interjected, “him and his dad live just below us!”

Both of her mothers looked surprised at that, "oh,” Hatsume Tomoko seemed to realise something, “you’re that librarian’s son?”

Hitoshi tilted his head, “yeah, you’ve met my dad then.”

She nodded, “he’s a nice man, always makes time to read to the kids hanging around.” Hitoshi smiled, that sounded about right, his dad always was a softie like that.

But then Izuku, who had been just staring at everything until now, signed, “shouldn’t we call him?”

Mei nodded, “yeah, Toshi! You can call your dad right?”

“Uh,” Hitoshi frowned, “yeah but, I, he’s at work right now.”

Mei and her mothers shared a glance, “kiddo,” Hatsume Aya began, “you’re gonna call your dad, ‘cause he seems like the kinda guy to get worried about his kid, and he doesn’t need to be wondering where you are when he gets home.”

“I, well,” Hitoshi scrambled for an explanation but came up short, “fine.” He muttered, pulling out his phone and tapping his dad’s contact and holding it up to his ear.

It picked up after a few rings, “Hitoshi! How are you doing buddy?” His dad’s voice was light and excited; he felt bad about ruining that.

“Hey dad, I’m fine, just, um, kinda sprained my ankle on the walk home.”

“What!?” The exclamation was somehow effective despite how quiet it was, “do you need me to come get you? I can ask someone to cover the last bit of my shift,” Dad whispered.

“No, I’m at, well I’m at the apartment building, a friend helped me and we’re at her place, it’s the one above ours,” he was beginning to ramble.

“Oh, you mean the Hatsumes?”

Hitoshi hummed in confirmation.

“Alright, I’ll be there in, twenty minutes, alright?” It sounded like his dad was shuffling papers in the background, “do you want me to grab some of those cookies you like? The ones shaped like cute cats?”

Hitoshi was suddenly very glad no-one else could hear this conversation, “uh, no that’s fine dad,” he said hurriedly, not wanting to deal with the feline-shaped hole in his aloof attitude, “and, you really don’t need to come home early, I’m fine.”

“Nope!” Dad said, “already packing up, the others will understand.”

Hitoshi sighed, knowing this was a losing battle, “this is dumb,” he muttered as he ended the call.

After that, the only real noise was Mei and her mothers talking about whatever projects they were working on, he couldn’t understand a word of it, though Izuku seemed to be rather interested.

Eventually, there was a knock on the door, and Hitoshi braced himself for a lecture about being careful as Hatsume Tomoko opened the door and let his dad in. “Hitoshi!” Dad rushed over to him, pulling him into a hug, “what happened!?”

Hitoshi immediately squirmed out of the hug, ignoring the slightly disappointed look on his dad’s face, “nothing, I-”

Mei whispered in his ear, “Toshi, maybe we should tell him…”

Hitoshi glared at her, "it's nothing."

Unfortunately, his dad wasn't oblivious, "are you sure?" He asked, his gaze flitting between the two children.

Hitoshi glared even harder at Mei who looked apologetic at least, "okay, so someone pushed me, not a big deal."

Izuku cleared their throat, and Dad startled as he realised they were there as well, "oh, hello, Izuku, was it?"

They nodded, glancing at Hitoshi with a look that said 'you're being stupid, but okay' as they signed a quick greeting. Hitoshi glared at them as well, but they glared back and really, they were terrifying when they did that, like they were going to steal your soul or something. "Hitoshi was texting us when it happened, so we went to make sure he got home!"

Dad sighed, "buddy," he looked at Hitoshi, "who pushed you?"

"No-one! I mean, it was just some random person, and it was probably an accident," Hitoshi grumbled.

His dad looked less convinced than normal, but acquiesced, "alright, let's just get you home," he turned to the Hatsumes, "sorry for the bother, and thank you for helping my son," he said as he helped Hitoshi off the table.

Hitoshi managed to limp to the door and waved bye to his friends, "thanks guys!"

Izuku waved back just as enthusiastically and Mei actually ran up and hugged him, careful not to send them both tumbling, "bye bye Toshi!" She said gleefully.

Hitoshi chuckled amusedly and managed to pry himself away to follow his dad to the elevator and back to their apartment.

On the way down, his dad spoke to fill the silence, "so, those are your friends?"

Hitoshi smiled, "yeah, they're great."

"Well, I don't know much about them, so I'll trust you," his dad grinned, "though I'm surprised you're friends with someone that, er... energetic."

"Mei's a lot, but she's nice, and not really that hard to understand once you get used to her," Hitoshi said, surprising himself with the defensive tone in his voice.

“I didn’t mean anything bad!” Dad held up his hands in surrender, “I just, I’m happy that you’ve got some good friends.”

Hitoshi smiled “yeah, so am I.”

Chapter End Notes

So, we meet the other two OCs that are going to be important to the story, I'll do the same thing I did for Chikara and give y'all a little bio:

Hatsume Tomoko
Age: 41 (would be 43 at the start of cannon)
Sexuality/Gender: Lesbian Demi-girl (she/they)
Quirk: Sharp Mind, a minor intelligence quirk
Voice: Haruka Kuroda (Noodle from the band Gorillaz)

Hatsume Aya
Age: 40 (would be 42 at the start of cannon)
Sexuality/Gender: Bisexual trans woman (she/her)
Quirk: Holoscreen, allows the user to project little interactive screens in front of them, (imagine that thing in every sci-fi story where the tech guy has hologram screens of blueprints and data in front of them and moves them around and stuff.)
Voice:Romi Park (Akane Owari from Danganronpa 2)

(also if anyone noticed, I like giving different characters unique typing styles, so:
Izuku: Types like a nerd, perfect grammar and spelling. (Aka how I type)
Mei: Has never capitalised anything in her life, uses a lot of kaomojis.
Hitoshi: Uses a lot of short form, texts like he's got a character limit.)

Chapter 86: Just chilling.

Chapter Summary

Izuku talks to their parents for a bit, and then hangs out with Hitoshi and Mei

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

Warning you all now that,

1. This chapter is a filler episode.

2. I wrote this chapter half-asleep with like, two assignments due tomorrow, this has not been proofread in the slightest.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku yawned quietly as they rolled out of bed that morning, meeting the gaze of the cat perched on their shelf, “morning Shadow,” they greeted her, giving her a few scritches. The black cat purred, her too big for her head eyes staring at them expectantly, they just huffed out a laugh and whistled quietly. *Lazy little bastard*, they thought as Shadow leapt over to perch on their shoulder. They winced a bit as they felt her weight land right on a fresh bruise.

Last night’s patrol had been, *eventful*, to say the least, between an incredibly alarming rise in attempted murders and a few moments of bad luck, they’d gotten pretty banged up. Dad was a bit worse off though, being not only a bigger target but also usually the first to get involved.

The faint sounds of rushed singing filled their ears as they opened the door, they frowned slightly at the off-key notes that slipped into the melody, that wasn’t good. They snuck over to the kitchen, grinning as they smelled the familiar scent of katsudon, probably the only thing they liked about tough patrols, Papa always made their favourite food after.

Speaking of Papa, he was watching the stove, singing a half-memorised song that they vaguely remembered hearing on the show last Friday, he tapped his foot impatiently, occasionally poking at the food as if it would make it cook faster. The only indication that he had

even noticed them slip into the room was a barely perceptible tilt of the head. They waved hello and put Shadow down before perching themself on the counter as they began humming along to the tune, wondering what had happened for Papa to be upset enough that he wasn't even smiling as he sang.

A few minutes later, Dad came slinking into the room, looking even worse than usual on account of the bandages wrapped around his arms and peeking out from under his shirt. He made eye contact with them, glanced at Papa who wasn't looking in their direction, then rolled his eyes fondly. "He's being fussy again isn't he?"

Izuku held back a giggle, "I think he's still upset about last night."

Dad smiled, looking over, "Zashi, Sunshine, you know we weren't hurt *that* bad, right?"

Papa scowled as he turned around, "yeah, but," he paused as he looked at Izuku, before giving Dad the look that meant 'we'll talk about this when the kid's not here.' Which was unfair in their opinion, they were also there last night, they could probably hear whatever this was, unless it was about boring paperwork stuff in which case they'd gladly sit it out.

Izuku ignored whatever that was, it wasn't like asking would do anything, Papa was stupidly good at hiding things when he wanted to, not that they could complain when he'd taught them how to do the same. Instead they focused on the food which was finally ready. It wasn't a wise idea to try and sneak a bite while Papa was distracted by talking to Dad, but they tried it anyways, only to get yanked back by their shirt as Papa gave them a deadpan stare. Okay, something really was off.

Papa sighed, "Izuku, why don't you go change, and by the time you do I'll have the table set up, alright?"

They nodded scurrying away as fast as they could and digging through their closet. While they were changing they heard a soft chime from their phone, they glanced over, wondering who had texted them. They actually had a few unread messages, so they hurried to finish changing and then caught up with whatever was sent. They had a few from Himiko, which were some photos of her and Desmo at the park yesterday, they could just about see Uncle Ryo in the background. Shoto and Tenya had sent them messages about the other legacy kids, Izuku was glad the five of them had been able to remain close for so

long, though they personally still thought Yaoyorozu and Monoma were way too uptight. Surprisingly, they had a text from Touya letting them know that he and Keigo were back in town after their latest mission, they smiled, happy to see their brother after nearly a week of him being in Fukuoka. The family group chat had a few messages but those were mostly between the adults, so they didn't bother.

And then there was their friends' group chat, which was the one that had chimed, they giggled as Hitoshi yelled at Mei for blowing things up again and waking him up early on the weekend. Mei just sent a picture of her grinning wildly, grease stains on her hands and somehow on her face, holding up one of her babies like those images of fishermen with prize catches. Hitoshi had yet to respond, probably wondering what the fuck kind of rebuttal that photo was in the first place. Izuku took the chance to type out a greeting and immediately the topic of conversation shifted.

After a few moments of back and forth, Hitoshi eventually mentioned that he was looking forward to training that afternoon, to which Izuku paused, their brain processing that for a moment before they frantically checked the date. It was Sunday. They cursed themself for forgetting that they were supposed to be at the factory in the afternoon. Hitoshi had a school project on Saturday, so he'd asked them to move their hangout to the next day, but then they'd completely forgotten.

They hurried back out to the kitchen, pausing as they caught a stern whisper of "you *know* this is pointless," but that stopped the moment their footsteps had been heard. They titled their head and glanced between their parents, with Papa quickly turning a scowl into a thin smile, and Dad looking thoroughly pissed off.

"*Hey* little listener," Papa's voice was strained, and Izuku wasn't a moron, their parents had been fighting about something, but they didn't know what. It wasn't that their parents *never* fought like this, it was just rare, and when it did happen it was because one of them was being stupid and obsessing over something. They glanced at their dad, based on the whisper earlier, they could guess he was the one being dumb.

"Can I go see Toshi and Mei in the afternoon?" They asked innocently, again, asking would get them nowhere.

"Yeah sure that's great!" Papa ruffled their hair, "just don't go running around or fighting anyone, alright?"

They nodded and grabbed their breakfast, sitting at the living room table to enjoy their favourite food, texting the group chat that their hangout was still going to happen. They paused for another moment, adding that Hitoshi didn't need to bother bringing his usual backpack.

In the afternoon they said by to their parents, and the cats, and headed out to the factory, getting there at about the same time as Hitoshi and Mei since they weren't running this time around.

They waved hello, getting Mei's attention first, "Izuku! There you are! We were waiting for you to jumpscare us or something!" She said as the trio made their way to the storage unit.

They giggled, "sorry, not today."

Hitoshi frowned, "are you alright?" He asked as he shut the door behind them.

Izuku nodded, "I'm fine, just did something stupid while parkouring yesterday and got a bit bruised, and I promised my papa I wouldn't make it worse," the lie came to them easily.

Mei frowned, "geez, that sounds rough," before looking around at the space, "so, if you and Toshi aren't training today, what *do* you want to do?"

Izuku paused, having thought about this for a while, they pulled out their training notebook, which was where they kept observations about their own family members' quirk training, and for a few weeks now, Hitoshi's. "Let's just talk? There are a few things we could discuss about your progress, and Mei probably wants to explain whatever she was blowing up in the morning."

Hitoshi laughed, "that is probably the weirdest way to say you want to just chill for a bit."

Izuku half-heartedly glared at him, "shush and let me have this." They signed, placing their book down onto the nearby box and gesturing for their friends to sit down next to them.

Hitoshi obliged, sitting next to Izuku while they updated some of their notes that they'd forgotten after last week, leaning over their shoulder as if he could hope to understand the code they wrote in, unfortunately for him, this was a Nedzu approved cipher. Meanwhile, Mei, who had no concept of personal space, draped herself over both of their laps as she began to chatter on about her work and how she'd

managed to cause an explosion before veering off into a tangent about puppies. Which then proceeded to get derailed *even more* as Hitoshi butted in with an exclamation of why cats were clearly the superior animal.

Izuku giggled along to the sound of the debate, though, personally they'd have to agree with Hitoshi on this one. They liked dogs too, Desmo was amazing, but he was arguing almost the exact same points their dad used when he was trying to rile up Uncle Sekijiro. Izuku smiled, Hitoshi would probably *love* talking to their dad, though they were keen on making sure that *didn't* happen, and Dad would be weirded out by having a fan. They really needed to ask him about that, but then again, they didn't want to freak him out.They were snapped out of their thoughts by Mei loudly complaining that Izuku wasn't coming to her defence, to which they immediately sided with Hitoshi, earning a fist bump and a cry of 'traitor!' They smiled, yes, they'd like to keep this pair to themself for a bit longer.

Chapter End Notes

> Shorter chapter, hope you guys enjoyed, I promise the next one is a bit more interesting.

Chapter 87: Goggles.

Chapter Summary

Mei shows off one of her babies.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mei glared at the little device in front of her, so far, her attempts at modifying her goggles had gone, fairly poorly. At least they hadn't exploded yet, which was good since she was actually rather attached to her goggles and would hate to see them ruined over a few modifications. She fiddled with the little lenses in her hands, one of these days, she'd probably be able to make complicated things like this on her own, but as of now she simply didn't have the resources to make a night vison lens from scratch, so, much to her chagrin, she'd had to ask her mothers for a pair. She sighed, adjusting one of the casings she'd made and slotting the lenses back in before testing their stability, they seemed to be fine, so she pushed them back into the spots on her goggles, where she'd eventually attach a hinge each once she'd gotten everything fitting snugly.

She grinned as she measured the clearance, quickly taking the component out and placing it on her workbench, it seemed like this was the last adjustment she'd have to make. She grabbed her screwdriver and quickly took off the magnifying lenses that would sit right in front of the filters, she giggled, if this worked she would love to experiment with other kinds of things, like thermal vision. Well technically there were kinds of night vision devices that used thermal wavelengths of light, but they were harder to find and weren't as powerful as devices that were fully dedicated to making heat maps. She hurriedly rummaged through the drawer, picking out two knife hinges that could have been pieces for a cabinet, but they had been thrown into a landfill at some point and now they would have a new life as key components in her goggles. She used her hacksaw to cut the pieces down to size, it had to be small enough to only attach to the metal edge of the lenses' casing without blocking the field of view, before sanding it down to make it safer to handle.

Then she took her goggles, making sure to unscrew the part holding the magnifying lenses, as well as the casings, and rushed to the spare room turned workshop where her ma was repairing a drill. "Ma!" She

called as she swung the door open, “I need to weld some stuff!”

Her ma looked up from where she was repairing what looked like a small motor, before nodding and rolling her wheelchair towards the small welding setup they had. The setup being a table in the far corner of the room with nothing flammable within a metre radius of it and heat resistant screens for safety. Ma held out her hand to catch the welding mask and gloves that Mei tossed at her.

Mei flipped her own mask down and also grabbed a welding rod, placing her goggles on the workbench while Ma opened the window and hooked up the torch. “Alright, I’ve got to attach these,” she put the casings next to her goggles, “onto that, with hinges,” she put the hinges down as well, “there’s about three millimetres of tolerance.” Her ma had seen the blueprints of course, she knew the measurements, but it couldn’t hurt to make extra sure.

Ma hummed and began welding the parts together while Mei watched from a safe distance. She wasn’t allowed to use the dangerous stuff yet, according to Mama she caused enough explosions already without fire getting involved. One of these days though, she was gonna be able to use that, and then she’d be able to do this herself without having to ask her parents for help.

After a while of sparks flying, which Mei personally thought was one of the most beautiful things in the world, kind of like useful fireworks, Ma finally turned off the torch, flipping her mask up to check the bonds. Mei scooted closer, leaning over her ma’s shoulder to get a better look at her most precious baby. It looked *perfect*.

She almost snatched it right then and there but restrained herself, it was still cooling and moving it now could wreck the joints or cause them to move out of alignment, oh and she’d probably burn her fingers. But as soon as it was safe to handle she cradled it in her hands, grinning at her ma before dashing back to her workbench and grabbing her tools. She carefully slotted in the lenses, screwed the casings shut, attached the magnifying parts back on, and retied the elastic band onto the back. And finally, she drew the curtains, turned off the lights, and took a deep breath, this was the moment of truth, it didn’t matter how many times she’d tested everything to make sure it worked, this part was always the most nerve wracking. She slid the goggles down over her eyes and swivelled the night vision lenses down into place with a nearly imperceptible *click*.

And the room lit up with shades of greys and greens.

Mei squealed and hopped in place, swivelling her head around to take in the entirety of the room, the only notes of bright white coming from under the door to the spare room. She turned and flicked on the light switch, wincing as she hurriedly flipped up the night vision lenses to stop the flood of blinging light that scorched her eyeballs. She then ran back to the spare room, “ma! It works!” She said, a wide grin on her face.

Her ma chuckled, “it does, does it?” she asked, and Mei nodded.

“Yeah, it looks perfect, and the calibrations are all correct and-”

She was cut off by the sound of a door opening and she scampered back into the living room, waving hello at her mama who had come home from her shift, “mama! It works!”

Mama tilted her head, grease staining her hair and fingers from a long day’s work, “*what* exactly works little spark?”

Mei giggled, “oh, right,” she muttered before pointing enthusiastically at the goggles on her head, “these! I finally got the night vision to work!”

“Really!?” Mama matched her grin, pulling her into a hug which she enthusiastically returned, “did you tell your ma?”

Mei nodded, “she helped me weld it in place!” She said, showing off the hinge mechanism.

“That’s just lovely,” her mama held out her hand questioningly, and Mei gave her the goggles, she inspected them thoroughly before smiling, “oh wow,” she murmured, “your design skills have gotten a lot better too.”

Mei made grabby hands at her baby, and Mama laughed amusedly as she gave them back, “c’mon Mei, why don’t we take a picture?” She asked.

Mei nodded excitedly as she skipped over to her workbench, posing with her baby in hand as her mama pulled out her phone. After the photo was taken, Mama just stared at it for a moment, and Mei cleared her throat, “um, does it look good?” She asked.

Mama nodded, “it certainly does,” her smile softened, “I still remember when you made that old thing.”

Mei took off the goggles, they were her first baby, two years ago, when she was eleven. After all, what better way to start making quirk support gear than making one for her own quirk? She hummed for a moment, cleaning up her desk and putting everything back where it came from.

After she was done, she glanced back at her new and improved goggles, then out at the slowly darkening evening sky, a bright idea popped into her head.

“Ma! Mama!” Mei called, “I’m gonna go downstairs for a bit! I wanna show Toshi the new goggles!”

Her ma stuck her arm out of the spare room to give a thumbs up which was all the permission she needed to take her baby and hurry to the staircase, taking the steps two at a time as she ran to Hitoshi’s apartment. She rapidly knocked on the door, bouncing on her heels as she waited. Soon, she heard footsteps approach, then the door swung open, and Hitoshi’s dad stared at her, completely bewildered.

“Hatsume?”

“Hi! Can I talk to Hitoshi?” Mei gave him her best smile, which probably just made her look mildly insane but oh well.

“Uh, yeah sure,” the older Shinso turned behind him, “hey buddy! Your friend is here; she wants to talk to you!”

There was frantic shuffling as Hitoshi practically pushed his dad out of the way, “Mei! What the hell are you doing here?” He hissed.

“I made those modifications to my goggles I was talking about the other day; I wanted to show you!” Mei held up her baby proudly.

Hitoshi blinked for a moment before pulling her inside the apartment, “we’ll talk in my room,” he said, dragging her by the sleeve of her shirt.

“Do you want me to make you both something to drink?” Hitoshi’s dad asked, “maybe hot cocoa with the cat marshmallows-”

“Dad!” Hitoshi glared at his father, red colouring his face, “shut up.” And with that he shoved Mei into his room and slammed the door.

Mei frowned, “that was a bit mean Toshi,” she’d never even *dream* of yelling at her parents like that.

Hitoshi scoffed, taking a seat on his bed and sulking, “he was embarrassing me.”

“As if you haven’t embarrassed yourself plenty of times,” she smirked, recalling the many times she’d seen him eat dirt during training, she even had a highlight reel on her phone, not that she’d admit that.

“That’s not,” he huffed, “I mean, seriously, *hot cocoa and cute marshmallows*? It’s so dumb.”

She blinked, “it sounds delicious to me.”

“It’s childish.”

Mei laughed, “well aren’t we kids?”

That seemed to set off a nerve, “no! We’re *teenagers*, there’s a big difference,” Hitoshi sneered, “kids are stupid.”

“We’ve been teens for like, less than a year?” she crossed her arms, if he was going to get snappy with her, then she’d just have to get stubborn.

“Yeah, but we *are* teens,” he pointed out, “so we’re too old for that cutesy sentimental crap.”

Mei crinkled her nose, “what the hell is wrong with you today?” She asked, because he’d never had a problem with her excessive kaomojis in the group chat, or her teddy bear key chain, and while Izuku, their looks aside, wasn’t really a ‘cutesy’ person, they talked so proudly of their family in a way that definitely fit under sentimental.

“I’m stating the facts,” he hissed, “my dad’s just a weird optimist.”

She hummed thoughtfully, Shinso Chikara seemed like a great guy honestly, though that could just be his quirk in action, but even then, he’d raised a great kid, and Hitoshi clearly loved his dad, so what was this about? “Alright Toshi, you’re being a real asshole right now, so explain to me. What. The. Fuck. Is. Wrong. With. Being. *Cutesy.*” She punctuated her sentence by tapping him on the forehead like a scolding parent.

That seemed to make him splutter, “it’s, there’s nothing *wrong*, it’s just stupid.” He crossed his arms, “folks like that are just asking to be kicked around.”

Mei blinked, she then sighed and sat next to him, “personal experience?” Maybe she could have been less terse about it, but he was being annoying.

Hitoshi tensed, “fuck no, do you think *I* would just let someone get away with that? Weren’t you paying attention!? I’m not some weak little kid!” His voice was raised now, and Mei clutched her goggles to her chest, startled at the sudden outburst.

He paused, and huffed, “whatever, you wanted to show me those, right?” It was the closest thing to sorry he’d probably give her right now, though she had no doubt he’d call her later to apologise properly.

Mei nodded, handing over her baby very gently, she trusted him not to destroy it, but she was still antsy about it being in someone else’s hands, “be careful with it, alright?” She said as she stood up and walked to the light switch, unsurprisingly, Hitoshi’s dark and heavy curtains blocked out all the last rays of sunlight, she’d be shocked if that wasn’t intentional.

Hitoshi nodded, “yeah, I’ll be careful.” He slid the goggles over his head, “so I just put these parts down?” He pointed at the lens casings which were currently out of the way.

“Yeah!” Mei grinned, turning off the light.

She couldn’t see anything, but she heard the click, and the quiet gasp from Hitoshi as the lenses worked their magic. She waved into the darkness, hoping that she was making some kind of eye contact with him. “Cool right?”

“Mei these are awesome!” He sounded utterly awed by her baby, she smiled, it was nice to be able to share her work with more than just her mothers.

“Alright, I’m gonna turn on the lights in a sec, you should probably put the lenses up if you don’t want to get blinded,” she giggled.

“You did that didn’t you?” Hitoshi held back a laugh as the lights came back on, and he set the goggles on his nightstand.

Mei laughed as well, “heh, yeah, I did,” she sat back on the bed, holding her goggles and inspecting them for damage before putting them back on her own head.

Hitoshi just kept staring at them, “I still can’t believe you and Izuku can do cool stuff like that; we’re not even in high school yet!”

Mei shrugged, “probably because of our families.”

“That’s you,” he pointed out, “who the fuck would *Izuku’s* family have to be to teach them shit like that?”

“I dunno, athletes?” Mei guessed, Izuku still hadn’t told them anything about their family beyond that it was *very* large, and that one of their relatives did engineering, and that their fathers were totally chill with them doing parkour and stuff.

“I dunno, they said their dad taught them how to do that disappearing shit they always pull. I mean what the hell kind of skillset is that!?” Hitoshi shook his head.

“They’re smart, maybe they taught themself?”

“Not a goddamn chance.”

Mei threw her hands up in defeat, “I give up, if they’re not telling us it’s probably for a good reason.”

Hitoshi hummed, “I know, I just don’t like that they’re keeping secrets when *we’ve* told them practically everything.”

“It’s bothering you that much?” Mei asked, pulling him into a hug, “I guess that makes sense.”

“It doesn’t matter,” he sighed, “they’re a sneaky little bastard, we won’t know anything they don’t want us to.”

“They’ll tell us eventually, I know it, we *are* their friends after all.”

Chapter End Notes

Holy shit I'm so late.

College can go die in a ditch, I've got three essays and a week to write them, next chapter's probably going to be late to because I need to not fail.

I don't have anything fun to say this time, but see you guys later I guess.

Chapter 88: A nudge in the right direction.

Chapter Summary

Tamaki picks his internship.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

There was something gloomy about the day, or maybe that was just the sense of foreboding emanating from bundle of letters sitting in Tamaki's backpack. He looked over the other students, easy to scan from his vantage point in the corner, all of them were chattering on and on about which hero they were picking for their internships soon. How could they be so casual when they were possibly making a decision that would affect the entire rest of their careers, their *lives*?

He heard Aizawa-sensei call everyone to attention again, so he snapped his gaze up, eyes focusing on the blackboard where the day's lesson had been written. They were doing a theory class today, though some people were rather disappointed at the lack of physical work after spending the last lesson picking their hero names, these were usually on the specific laws and ethics related to heroics. At first everyone had groaned and grumbled when they were asked to do this stuff, saying that all they had to do was follow the law. But then sensei had pointed out that the letter of the law stated that *anyone* using their quirk without a license had to be arrested, and nobody in their right mind would arrest someone for, say, using their telekinesis to fish their keys out of a drain.

So now most of the class begrudgingly sat through these lessons, and the few others listened with rapt attention, Tamaki was proud to say he was in the latter category. It wasn't that ethics had interested him all that much at first, more so that he found himself seriously enjoying the questions posed to the class, plus he liked knowing where the lines were drawn, that made it less likely he'd make a fool of himself later.

"Alright class," Aizawa-sensei sounded more alert than normal, odd, "this one's a bit of a special topic. And by that I mean if you find yourself thinking you shouldn't have to learn about it you can just go ahead and rethink your career choices."

That certainly got everyone to focus up, if there was one thing their

teacher didn't joke around about, it was expulsion. Tamaki furrowed his brow, wondering what kind of topic could be so tremendously crucial. He quickly got his answer as Aizawa-sensei wrote a header on the blackboard.

'Quirkism.'

Tamaki exchanged a look with Nejire who was seated next to him, her eyes were wide and seemingly excited at the prospect of this discussion. There were whispers in the rest of the class, some people wondering if this was even allowed, others muttering about politics, all of them were silenced by Aizawa-sensei's quirked glare.

"If anyone says this doesn't affect heroics you're getting detention," he said sternly as he began to pull up an entire presentation, "and I swear if I hear any 'dark humour' during this lesson I am personally dragging you to Nedzu's office."

Tamaki raised an eyebrow; this was going to be good. He heard Nejire snicker beside him and whisper, "I bet you it takes less than ten minutes for someone to do something stupid."

"Well," Tamaki mumbled, "he's right, if they aren't taking this seriously they're not gonna be very good heroes."

"They could be," Nejire rolled her eyes at some of the other students who already looked like they were gonna cause trouble, "well not *good* heroes, but popular ones."

"Yeah, but didn't sensei expel that girl last week for trying to argue with him during the rescue simulation?"

"She totally deserved it," Nejire grumbled, "the bitch didn't even try to save me."

Tamaki giggled, it had been amusing to watch the girl realise she couldn't get away with the 'but I got the bad guy' defence. Aizawa-sensei and Kurose-sensei had been *furious* at her, rightfully so, and the next day she didn't come into class, so everyone could guess what had happened.

The actual lesson was mostly about the ways that quirkism was practically encoded into the law, not explicitly, but subtly, like any other -ism or -phobia was up until a decade or so ago. Tamaki rigorously took notes, getting the feeling that this was one of those things that would be on their finals as a major part of their grade if

their teacher was taking this so seriously. He noted that Nejire was mostly just staring at the board, but ignored that knowing she was memorizing it anyway. And besides, even if she didn't he would just share notes with her.

A few people got in trouble during class, but for the most part everyone behaved, which was good considering they were already down to fourteen people and it was only their first year! Tamaki really did hope that most of the others made it, they all worked so hard to get here and he knew how horrible it felt to have your dreams crushed.

By the time lunch rolled around, Tamaki's brain was swimming, between the unusually strict ethics class, a pop quiz from Yamada-sensei, and the entire hell subject that was mathematics, he was just about ready to go home. And there was still the problem of who he was going to pick for his internship.

A voice called out from the other end of the hall, "there you two are!" Mirio sprinted up to them, pulling them both into a hug. "Man, today's ethics class was *weird*," he muttered distractedly as he and Nejire dragged Tamaki towards the cafeteria.

"Was it quirkism?" Nejire asked, to which Mirio nodded.

"Yeah, a few of my classmates said some dumb stuff about mutant quirks and Kan-sensei sent them to the principal's office," Mirio shuddered, "honestly I don't think I've ever seen it that mad!"

"Kinda weird, isn't it?" Nejire muttered, quietly glaring at one of the kids from 2-B who she'd been holding a grudge against for a few weeks now as she passed them while grabbing her tray of food.

"What do you mean?" Mirio also grabbed a tray and followed her to their spot, with Tamaki trailing silently behind, choosing to stare at his food instead of feeding the cloud of anxiety in his mind.

Nejire huffed as she sat down, "well, people taught us about this stuff back in middle school, right?"

Mirio nodded, seemingly catching onto where this was going, "yeah, and it's not like this kind of intensity about it is standard, there's plenty of heroes who do quirkist things and get away with it."

"I mean," Nejire said between mouthfuls, "I get that it's important, and I'd hate if it *wasn't* taken this seriously, but why do you think our

teachers are being this strict?"

"It's not that hard to see."

Tamaki's friends stared at him, "what do you mean Sprout?" Mirio asked.

"Well," he began carefully, "in general, messing with someone's body, even your own, seems disgusting to most," he knew that fairly well, "and I don't think a lot of people appreciate having their quirks messed with."

Nejire's eyes widened, "so you're saying it's 'cause they know what it's like?"

"Maybe," Tamaki shrugged, "I don't know, I just think it's usually people who've been through this stuff who take it the most seriously, I mean, you've seen how harsh they are on bullies."

Mirio hummed, his eyes landing on the papers sticking out of Tamaki's backpack, "still having trouble with your internship pick? C'mon Tamaki, we've only got until tomorrow."

Tamaki pulled his hoodie over his face before trying to stuff the letters back into the bag, "it's just so hard to choose."

"Didn't you only get three?" Nejire asked, trying to peek at the letters.

Tamaki huffed, "yes, I know I-"

He paused as he pulled out the letters and found *four.* Three were his offer letters, and one was something he'd only heard rumours about from the upperclassmen. Nejire gasped, "is that from the ghost!?" She whisper yelled.

Mirio shushed her quickly, eyes glued to the letter, clearly hastily folded and with a doodle of a green ghost in the corner. Tamaki hesitantly opened it, wondering whether someone was playing a prank on him, he'd thought the 'ghost of U.A' was just some weird thing the upperclassmen made up to haze the newcomers. But then how had this even gotten in his bag?

'You work well under calm and less crowded environments, perhaps consider a lower profile and/or less energetic hero, though more importantly, find one that can help you train your quirk. P.S. Just talk to your teachers, they're out in the school grounds right now, take a left from

the entrance and keep walking.'

Tamaki blinked, that, was definitely advice, "huh, I thought the ghost was supposed to give quirk advice?" He muttered

The other two leaned over to read, impatient as always. "About the internships?" Nejire looked properly befuddled at the sudden break in MO for the ghost.

Mirio stood up, "well, why don't we take its advice? Let's go find our senseis." Nejire nodded and Tamaki, more reluctantly, put the letters back in his bag and followed them.

They hurried out to the entrance of the building, and then took a left like the letter said, and while Tamaki was doubtful of finding anyone with 'just keep walking' as the final instruction, he tried it anyway. The three of them made their way towards the forest, until they spotted the two heroics teachers talking between themselves under the shade of the trees. Tamaki shared a look with his friends; the ghost was right? How on earth had it figured out the where their teachers were? Did it's seeming omnipotence reach *outside* the main building? Tamaki could have sworn that the rumours only said that letters appeared just after classes, or in the mornings when they arrived to school, nothing about the school grounds.

Their teachers noticed them before they even got close. "Togata, Hado, Amajiki," Kan raised an eyebrow as the trio approached, "aren't you kids supposed to be having lunch?" It asked.

Nejire and Mirio looked over at Tamaki, who shuffled to the front of the group, "oh, I, just wanted to ask Aizawa-sensei a few questions," he muttered.

The teachers shared a look, "alright kid," Aizawa-sensei gestured at Tamaki, "what's bothering you?"

Tamaki fished out his letters, "I still don't know who I want to intern with," he admitted, staring at the ground.

Aizawa-sensei hummed, glancing at the other two students, "and you two are just here as their emotional support or?"

Nejire giggled, "just helping our bestie, I've already picked Ryukyu."

Mirio shook his head, "I still can't believe I got an offer from *Sir Nighteye*." Tamaki certainly remembered that, Mirio had come

crashing through the halls after class and practically tackled him while blabbering about being offered an internship from someone *that* famous.

Kan chuckled, murmuring something about limelight heroes and idolization.

Aizawa-sensei cleared his throat, “right, well, what are your offers Amajiki?”

Tamaki looked over his letters, “well, I’ve got one from Ryukyu as well, then there’s Fat Gum, and uh, Ms Joke?”

A look of utter horror crossed the teachers’ faces at the last name, “I-” Kan looked at its co-worker as if it couldn’t believe what it was hearing, “did Emi really just?”

“I’m going to strangle her,” Aizawa-sensei grumbled quietly before forcing his face back to neutral, “so any ideas on who you want to pick?”

Tamaki looked between the two teachers, feeling glad that he hadn’t even considered Ms Joke as an option, “well,” he knew what the proper answer was, who he really *should* go with. But at the same time, “I was thinking it would be nice to go with Ryukyu,” he murmured, “but.”

“But that’s because Hado is going to her, right?” Kan asked, a flash of sympathy in its eyes.

Well, no, that was part of it, but it was mostly because he’d seen a few interviews with the various heroes, or rather with Ryukyu and Fat Gum, Ms Joke was shockingly difficult to find anything about. Ryukyu was always calm, very sweet, and never seemed to be arrogant about anything. Fat Gum seemed like a nice enough guy, but Tamaki could barely get through the idea of even *talking* to someone that extroverted who wasn’t Mirio without wanting to curl up and cry.

“It’s just that, Fat Gum seems like, a lot,” he said.

Aizawa-sensei huffed, “oh, that? Kid, we always talk to the heroes in advance, to let them know about any issues that might come up or accommodations that would have to be made. If your anxiety’s the problem, we can tell him to be careful about that.”

Tamaki picked at his nails, “will he listen?” He asked, his voice going

so quiet that it was almost a squeak.

“He will,” Kan said, “Ryo, I mean, Hound Dog knows him pretty well, and even if I couldn’t vouch for him like that, there’s so much vetting we do about who is and isn’t allowed to give internship or work studies offers.” It shrugged, “if he was the kind of person to not take a kid’s needs into account, we wouldn’t have put him on the list.”

“Oh,” Tamaki breathed a sigh of relief, and though he was still insanely anxious about it, the teachers at U.A had been true to their word so far, so he figured he could trust them.

Mirio grinned and patted him on the back, “isn’t that great Tamaki! I bet you’ll get to train your quirk so much!”

Tamaki nodded, thanking the two heroics teachers as he and his friends ran back to the main building for art history. He could do this.

Chapter End Notes

> Hi, I'd apologise, but like, I was sick as hell for the past like, four-five days, and just got around to finishing this chapter. So it's also not proofread, like *at all*.
>
> Anyways, Tamaki is best boy.
>
> I'll see y'all, eh, I don't even know at this point, I'll try to get back on track for Saturdays, but like, no promises.

Chapter 89: Sleepover!

Chapter Summary

Izuku has a sleepover with their friends.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku bounced around their room grabbing their pyjamas and their notebook and a few other things. Was this the first sleepover they'd ever had? No. They had two cousins their own age, plus Shoto existed, and they all spent plenty of time at each other's houses. But this *was* the first time they'd be having a sleepover with their new friends, so they were more than a little excited at the prospect.

They hummed along to the music in their headphones as they finished packing their things, they grinned to themself, they really couldn't wait. They waltzed out of their room, stopping to pet Mop who was stubbornly trying to trip them up until they acquiesced to her royal fluffiness' demands. Izuku just rolled their eyes fondly at the little bastard and gave her a kiss on the forehead before running over to the living room.

"Dad! Papa!" They squealed as they practically flung themself at their parents.

Their papa seemed genuinely startled and scrambled to catch them before they could send all three of them tumbling to the ground, "hey kiddo!" He chuckled, "are you excited?"

Izuku nodded, "yeah! I'm super excited! Hitoshi said he was gonna show us some movies, and we're gonna talk for hours, and we're gonna have so much fun!"

Dad laughed as well, "alright then, we won't keep you," he ruffled their hair, "you got your phone with you?"

They nodded, "and it's charged, and I took the cable just in case."

"Good, and what's the rule?" Papa asked.

“I have to call someone if an emergency happens, even if I can handle it on my own, and I’ll always pick up your calls, no matter what.” Izuku recited dutifully, they didn’t exactly blame their parents for being more than a little antsy about leaving them with people who, one, didn’t have either of their numbers, and two, were not trained heroes. But really, kids had sleepovers all the time, and things turned out fine, usually, so it wasn’t like they were in any kind of immediate danger.

Their thoughts must have shown on their face because Dad raised an eyebrow, “most kids aren’t gonna try and fight the problem head on you know.”

Izuku giggled, “I’ll be careful!”

Papa hugged them tight, “alright,” he sighed, “we’ll see you in a few days Izuku.”

Izuku didn’t want to say anything to that, but they had to. It was rotten luck really, they’d had this sleepover planned for weeks, and now an emergency was dragging their parents, and several other family members, halfway across the country on the same day. Oh well, villains didn’t usually take anyone’s feelings into consideration, least of all the heroes trying to arrest them. “You’re gonna be fine, right?” They asked, already knowing the answer.

“You know we can’t promise you that kid,” Dad gave them a sad look as he joined the hug, “but we’ll do our best.”

Izuku nodded silently, no matter how many times it happened, having to say goodbye to anyone in their family for more than a day or two was always going to be awfully nerve wracking. Still, there was nothing they could really do about it, so they held back their tears, they could cry after the sleepover, otherwise their friends would ask questions.

Eventually, there was a knock on the door and Izuku stepped aside, buzzing with excitement because they knew who it was, as Papa opened it, “hey little listener, sorry again for the short notice.”

There was a rough laugh as Touya shrugged, “eh, it’s not like me or Birdie had any plans this week.”

“Hi Tou!” Izuku hopped up to their brother.

“Hey Zuku,” Touya gave them a pat on the head before turning back

to Dad and Papa.

“What?” Dad asked before being abruptly pulled into a hug along with Papa.

“Don’t you fucking *dare* die on us,” if Touya could still cry Izuku had no doubt he’d be sobbing right about now, “alright?”

“We’ll try kiddo, we’ll try,” Papa promised him, running a hand through his hair in comfort.

Touya sniffled quietly, “good.”

Izuku stuck right next to their brother as they made their way outside the building, and as soon as they stepped foot onto the street, he turned to them.

“I’m gonna drop you off at your friends’ place, and I’ll be back in the morning at around seven, right?” He clarified.

Izuku hummed, “and I’ve got some extra clothes in my bag, so you don’t have to worry about coming back here tomorrow.”

Touya nudged them forward, “alright, we better get going then, the sooner you get to start your sleepover, the sooner I can go pick up Himiko from Uncle Sekijiro and Uncle Ryo.”

They nodded, speed walking just behind him, “are you sure you and Kei can take care of *both* of us?” They asked, mostly dubious about Keigo’s babysitting ability.

“Well, yeah, besides, we’re the least likely to get called out right now, so unless you wanna go stay with Tenya’s parents or at the estate...”

Izuku rolled their eyes, “yeah yeah, just making sure.” Although spending time at what was now legally Fuyumi’s manor *would* be fun.

But trying to change the topic, they began rambling on one of their older analyses, talking about how they could have improved it and what they would have changed. Of course, Touya listened raptly, no matter how many times he’d hear this exact bit of information before, he’d always indulge them in their interests.

And by the time they got to the building, really only a twenty-minute walk, Izuku was feeling much better and bouncier. So they quickly pointed out exactly which apartment they had to go to, and Touya put

on a face mask in addition to having pulled up his hoodie earlier as they entered the building. There was only a slim chance they'd recognise him, Touya's most public civilian appearance was with white hair, and that was nearly two years ago, and Dabi the rescue hero wasn't very well known outside of dedicated circles. But better safe than sorry, since even if Izuku wanted to tell their friends who their family was, they certainly weren't in any kind of mindset to be answering the barrage of questions they'd surely get from Hitoshi's dad.

Izuku hurriedly knocked on the door as soon as they reached Hitoshi's apartment, being greeted by their friend.

"Oh, hey Izuku!" Hitoshi smiled at them, glancing momentarily at Touya as his dad joined him at the door.

"Hey," Touya nodded at the older Shinso, "I'm Izuku's brother, I'll come by tomorrow at around seven to pick them up, that's cool with you?"

Hitoshi's dad smiled, "well It's nice to meet you, and yeah, sure."

Touya then turned to Izuku, "alright you little gremlin bastard, have fun." He ruffled their hair, laughing as they glared at him.

Izuku just huffed fondly, "see you tomorrow dipshit," they signed before they joined Hitoshi in the living room.

Their eyes lit up as they noticed that Mei was already here, and the two of them grinned, "Izuku!!" She exclaimed, rushing up to them and giving them a big hug which they enthusiastically returned.

They pulled away after a bit, "so, what're we doing first?"

Hitoshi butted into the conversation, "a movie, a scary one," he pointed at the TV, "or, y'know, if you don't like those we can do a different genre."

Izuku's eyes lit up, "oh I *love* spooky things!" They giggled.

"Great," Hitoshi grinned, "you can put your bag in my room," he said as he grabbed the remote.

Izuku hurried to do as he suggested, noting that Mei's duffle bag was already there, before hurrying back to join their friends on the couch.

Hitoshi put on a slasher movie, it was kind of generic, clearly just made to be yet another rehash of every ‘dumb teens encounter a murderer in a remote location’ plot ever. But it was still good fun to watch, mostly because the three of them were having a grand old time heckling the dumb protagonists every step of the way. And despite Hitoshi having apparently seen this about a dozen times already, he still yelped every time a jumpscare came up, same as Izuku and Mei.

“Oh, I love this scene!” Hitoshi grinned as the comedic side character looked for his friends in the cabin they were all staying in, using his light quirk to see through the dark, though it was very clear that the quirk was poorly done CGI.

Izuku tilted their head, it seemed to them that the killer had to have some kind of teleportation or speed quirk, otherwise the way they just seemed to appear in locations they should really be miles away from didn’t make any sense. Then again, slasher movies never really paid attention to that kind of thing, so it was likely that it could be something else entirely. “Is the killer going to appear behind him while he makes a dumb joke about his friends pranking him?” They asked, knowing exactly how this kind of thing usually went.

But Hitoshi shook his head, and just then, one of the character’s friends walked in, a smile on her face as she hugged her friend in relief. Mei frowned, before her eyes lit up, “oh, oh shit, didn’t she go with the main girl a couple minutes to investigate the woods?”

Izuku gasped, and Hitoshi cackled as he saw his friends realise the twist just before the killer disguised as the friend killed the comedic side character in a bloody, over the top gruesome way.

“That was awesome!” Mei giggled, and Izuku nodded in agreement with their eyes glued to the screen as the movie reached the big climactic chase where the main girl, being the last one alive, led the killer through the woods and into a trap, killing them for good.

As the credits rolled, Hitoshi turned off the movie, and the three of them began talking about whatever came to mind for several hours until Hitoshi’s dad called them all for dinner.

Izuku sat down, quietly eating their food as Mei and Hitoshi continued to chatter about story tropes and realism. They had their own opinions about the subject, but for now they preferred listening to their friends vehemently agree that men love interests had no business being such unrepentant assholes to everyone all the time.

Suddenly, Hitoshi's dad cleared his throat, "um, Izuku?"

Izuku hummed, indicating for him to continue.

"So, any particular reason your parents weren't the ones dropping you off?" He asked.

Izuku frowned, but nodded, being very careful with their words to make sure their lowered guard didn't make them say anything stupid, "they're out of town for work, and I'm staying with my brother, why?"

"Nothing, just, Hitoshi's never mentioned meeting them either," the older Shinso tilted his head, "and I don't know if you live close by or anything, but should they really be letting you wander out here alone?"

Izuku huffed, "I told you, they're busy people, and we do live close by actually." And they left it at that, pointedly focusing back on their food.

After they finished dinner, Hitoshi dragged the two of them to his room, immediately turning to Izuku, "so, that was your brother earlier?" He asked, a wide grin on his face.

Izuku giggled, "yep, that was my big brother!" They could guess fairly well why Hitoshi had that expression.

"He's so cool!" He said, flopping backwards onto his bed.

Mei tilted her head, "oh? What was he like?"

Hitoshi sat up quickly, "okay, so I didn't get to see his face, 'cause he was wearing a mask, but he had this awesome hoodie with a rock band logo on it, and ripped jeans and *chains on his belt*." He was practically squealing at that point, "how the hell did you never mention your brother was this awesome!?"

Izuku giggled, finding it hilarious that Hitoshi was already getting starry-eyed just from one meeting.

Hitoshi stared at them unblinkingly, "no, seriously, I wanna be like that when I grow up!"

That just caused Izuku to laugh even more, "if you told him that, he'd probably tell you he's a terrible role model." Which was entirely untrue in their opinion, since that would be Touya referencing his past

as a closed off drifter, not his current place as a hero to the world, and a brother, son, and nephew to his massive family.

Mei snorted, “well he sounds like a joyful guy,” she said sarcastically.

Izuku shrugged, “well someone’s gotta balance out his roommate’s, *everything.*”

Hitoshi raised an eyebrow at that, “and they were roommates?” He asked, smirking.

Izuku blinked, before shrugging, “honestly, probably yes, but neither of them have said anything so I cannot confirm nor deny.”

Mei pouted, “aww, and here I was hoping for some drama.”

“Sorry, not your lucky day,” they grinned, giggling as Hitoshi stifled a yawn, “sleepy already?”

“Oh shut up,” he muttered, “I’m just tired today, alright?”

Mei giggled, “you’re tired every day Toshi.”

Izuku joined in the laughter as they poked him on the cheek, “and you get more sleep than either of us, so how?”

Hitoshi groaned, burying his face in the mattress, “leave me alone alright! I can’t help it!”

Mei patted him on the back, “that’s alright Toshi, that just means you gotta drink as much coffee as me ‘n Izu!”

He flipped her off without looking up, though that just caused all three of them to burst into laughter. “Fine,” Hitoshi finally said, “let’s go to sleep.”

Mei grinned, staring at him with expectant eyes, “Hitoshi, c’mon, you promised!”

He sighed, glancing at Izuku, “I told Mei we could make a blanket fort in the corner over there,” he pointed at the space between his bed and the far wall, “I’ll get started.”

Izuku and Mei nodded before quickly grabbing their pyjamas from their bags and beginning to change, at which point Hitoshi yelped, “for fucks sake you two, at least warn me so I can turn around!” He screeched, turning as red as a tomato while the other two laughed at

him.

“Come on Toshi, it’s not like we’re naked,” Mei reasoned, voice slightly muffled by her shirt, to which Izuku nodded as they quickly pulled on their sweatpants.

“That’s not the point!” He grumbled, “what is wrong with both of you.”

“Do you want the list in alphabetical order or order of severity?” Izuku asked cheekily, getting a pillow thrown at them in retaliation.

“Smartass,” Hitoshi shot back, “you think you’re so funny-” He blinked, all playfulness draining from his gaze as he stared at them, “what the hell?”

Mei seemed equally concerned as she looked them up and down.

Izuku stared down at their bare torso, realising right about now that neither of their friends had ever seen their scars before, “oh, right, that.” They shrugged and put on their shirt.

“How the hell did you get all those?” Hitoshi looked mildly horrified.

“They’re from before I got adopted,” well, most of them were, but they didn’t want to bring the vigilantism into it, so they omitted that particular clarification.

“Geez,” Mei shuddered, “I know you said you got bullied, but, *wow*.”

“Yeah, well,” Izuku tossed back the pillow Hitoshi had thrown, “my family saved me, and made sure my old school got shut down for neglect, so really, I don’t think about it much anymore.”

“What happened to your bullies?” Mei asked, helping construct the blanket canopy while Hitoshi tried to arrange a comfortable sleeping space inside.

“I don’t know, all of the worst ones got marks on their records, and had to move schools, but other than that I have no idea.”

Their friends shared a look, but Izuku ignored that in favour of helping Hitoshi arrange the pillows, at which point he paused, “you know, earlier, my dad was...”

“Insinuating that my parents are neglectful?” Izuku tilted their head, “yeah, I got that,” they stopped momentarily to adjust a pillow,

perhaps with a bit more force than needed, “he’s wrong. They saved my life, literally,” they sighed, “it’s not their fault they have demanding jobs, I mean, their jobs were the reason they never planned to have kids, but, they also knew nobody else would treat me well so.”

Hitoshi stared at them for a moment before pulling them into a hug, “I’m sorry.”

Izuku laughed, “don’t be, it was a reasonable assumption, but my parents spend every night with me and can take me to the less stressful part of their work, so it’s not really a problem, I still spend most of my time with them.”

Mei flopped onto the blanket nest, “huh, they sound like good people, like, in general.”

Izuku nodded, pulling Hitoshi with them as the three of them cuddled up under one of the thicker blankets, “they’re amazing.” Even more than their friends knew.

Chapter End Notes

Awwww, adorable gremlins <3

Also fuck yeah I managed to post this on Saturday!

Chapter 90: Home away from home.

Chapter Summary

Izuku goes to Touya's apartment.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

That morning, Izuku was the first up even before the sun had begun to rise. A habit formed over years of living on the street that would likely never be broken even though it wasn't necessarily needed anymore, it was still useful for reasons other than safety. They suppressed a yawn, quickly and discreetly wriggling out from under the blanket as their mind rapidly caught up to why this wasn't their own room. They smiled, wondering for a moment if they should wake up their friends, before deciding against it, Hitoshi needed the rest, and Mei wouldn't be able to let him. Besides, this gave them the chance to breathe for a bit. It wasn't that they didn't love their friends' company, but there were some things they still wanted to keep close to their chest.

They silently got dressed, pausing as they reached for their locket, tracing the star engravings on its surface. Should they wear it now? It wasn't like their friends hadn't seen it before considering they wore it nearly everywhere, but they really didn't want Hitoshi's dad asking questions. They eventually put the locket around their neck, fiddling with the clasp for a moment as they tried to close it by feel alone. It was important, especially at a time like this. They still remembered when Aunt Nemuri got it for them, back before they were even properly family, but it was only after Touya showed up that they finally figured out what to put in it. They clicked it open, staring at the picture of their eleven-year-old self and a newly adopted Touya being hugged by both of their parents. They'd have tried to fit the rest of their family in the frame, but the locket was too small for a group shot like that to be clear. Still, it had been one of their most precious possessions ever since.

They sighed quietly and closed it again, giving it a tight squeeze before tucking it under their sweater as they heard the shuffling of their friends waking up along with the few rays of sun that managed to peek through the gap between the blackout curtains.

“Izu?” Mei’s sleepy voice called, they hummed in acknowledgment.

That caused both of their friends to quickly scramble out of the blanket fort, nearly taking the whole thing down. Hitoshi stared in disbelief for a bit before he barked out a laugh, “how the hell are you *already* dressed!?” He asked.

They shrugged, “because I woke up early?” They signed before grabbing their toothbrush and toothpaste and heading to the bathroom.

By the time they got back and grabbed their bag, Hitoshi and Mei had finally gotten dressed and were stretching away the last bits of sleep from their bodies. “Finally awake sleepyheads?” They couldn’t resist a bit of teasing.

Mei rolled her eyes, “yeah yeah, we’re awake,” she playfully pushed them, “seriously, how the hell were you up so early?”

“And being so energetic, totally not fair,” Hitoshi grumbled.

Izuku laughed, “aww, is someone being a grumpy bastard?” They ruffled his hair and managed to dodge the light punch aimed at their arm, playfully sticking their tongue out at him.

Mei giggled at the interaction, also ruffling Hitoshi’s hair but not being quite quick enough to avoid her hand being smacked away, *“seriously you two!?”* Hitoshi shook his head, a mask of annoyance belied by the smile he was trying, and failing miserably, to keep down.

That just caused Mei to laugh even harder, “sorry Toshi, but you’re really easy to mess with.”

Hitoshi didn’t say anything to that, however Izuku had been raised by many people who could either read others like books, or were the cagiest bastards around, or both, they caught the minute twitch in his eye. “Is something wrong with that?”

Hitoshi startled, as if surprised they’d even noticed, “huh? No, it’s nothing, I was thinking about something else.” He shook his head and glanced at the little cat clock on his nightstand, “oh hey would you look at that, time for breakfast!” He said, ducking past the other two and out the door.

Izuku and Mei shared a look, but Mei shook her head whispering, “last

time I pressed him on something he kinda, blew up at me."

Izuku grimaced, so better to leave well enough alone, got it. They quickly followed Hitoshi out to the living room where he was already talking with his dad, they waved hello and Mei chirped a greeting.

"Morning kids," Hitoshi's dad replied, "sleep well?"

All three of them nodded at the same time, then burst into laughter at the unintentional synchronicity. Izuku grinned as they all sat down for breakfast. Hitoshi's dad's cooking was pretty good if this and last night's dinner were anything to go by, though they doubted it would *ever* hold a candle in their mind to their papa's.

Mei chattered on between mouthfuls of noodles and chicken, Hitoshi and Izuku didn't join in on the conversation, taking their time with their food and listening to their friend even after they'd all finished eating.

Hitoshi suddenly titled his head, noticing that Izuku had begun staring at the clock, "yo, Izu, you alright buddy?"

Izuku nodded absentmindedly, "yeah, just waiting."

Mei also stopped by then, "for your brother?" She asked, pouting slightly, "are we boring you?"

Izuku quickly shook their head, "no! Sorry, I just," they glanced around to make sure the older Shinso had gone to get ready for work, "it's always a bit, *weird,* having to stay with someone other than my parents."

Hitoshi gave them a sympathetic look, "yeah, well, at least you know they're coming home soon."

Izuku refrained from pointing out that, no, they didn't actually know if their parents were coming home *at all*, and that was exactly what was causing their anxiety. Instead they gave a sweet smile "yeah, at least I've got that."

After a little while though, there was a sharp knock on the door, and Izuku practically jumped from their seat, grabbing their backpack as they did and running up to the door. They bounced on their heels as Hitoshi's dad opened the door, and they tackled their brother into a hug.

“Woah!” Touya caught them easily, being entirely used to their antics, “hello you little pest,” he said affectionately as he lifted them into the air.

Izuku yelped, flipping him off and wiggling until he was forced to drop them. “Jerk,” they softly punched him in the side as he tried to grab their backpack.

“Alright, let’s get going,” Touya waved at Hitoshi and Mei, and Izuku could have sworn they saw Hitoshi hide a squeal, which they were *absolutely* going to tease him about later. “Hope they didn’t bore you all with their notebooks for the whole night,” he joked.

Mei shook her head, “nah, we love that stuff,” she grinned.

And Hitoshi finally seemed to find his voice, “your outfit’s cool,” he blurted out before quickly trying to regain whatever dignity he could, “I mean, it seems neat, I like the chains.”

Touya chuckled, “thanks kid, from what Izuku’s told me your taste in fashion isn’t half bad either.”

Izuku giggled at Hitoshi’s stunned face and hurried to drag their brother away before he made the poor boy faint or something. And the pair quickly made their way down to the street, at which point Izuku began rambling about how fun their sleepover was until they got to Touya’s apartment.

Touya kicked opened the door and waltzed in, “what’s up fuckers!”

Izuku skipped in after him, “hi!” They called to Keigo, who was entirely unaffected by Touya’s dramatics and waved before continuing to read his book, a romance novel if Izuku was seeing the cover right.

They grinned as they heard rapid footsteps approach from the direction of the guest room, spinning around just in time to catch a hug and a very enthusiastic, “hi Zuzu!” From Himiko.

“Himi!!” Izuku grinned, returning the hug, “how are you?”

Himiko hummed, “alright I guess, but I wanna know about your sleepover!!”

Izuku grinned, “it was great! We watched a slasher movie, and talked for hours, and made a blanket fort!”

Himiko gasped, “a spooky movie? *Scandalous*,” she laughed.

Izuku joined in on the laughter, “oh yeah, doesn’t *anybody* realise how much harm these things do to teenagers fragile minds!?”

Himiko scoffed, “I still have no idea what she was on about with that, it wasn’t even a scary movie.”

“What was your physics teacher thinking?” Izuku asked, it had been a few months since the incident, but it had gone down in infamy among their family, who now quoted it whenever something even remotely violent happened in a film.

Touya butted into the conversation, “if a few screams are enough to send little old ladies into a frenzy, I must be their worst nightmare!” He grinned sharply.

Keigo tapped him on the shin with the side of the book, “says the guy who’s never actually killed anyone,” he muttered, mostly playfully, but Izuku knew better.

Touya frowned at that, before promptly dropping himself onto the couch and trapping Keigo in a hug, forcing him to drop his book onto the floor, “shut it Birdie.”

Keigo struggled for a bit, “Ashes!” He squawked before ultimately giving up, “screw you bitch.”

Touya just stuck his tongue out in response.

Izuku rolled their eyes at the antics before hopping onto the arm of the couch, “deal with it Kei, this is your penance for self-deprecation.”

Himiko nodded, picking the book up and reading the summary, “ooh, coffee shops and a murder mystery? Cute!” She giggled, “I think I’d like a coffee shop meet-cute, not that the murders aren’t interesting!” Izuku would never understand their cousin’s obsession with finding a partner, they were perfectly happy sticking with friendships forever, but to each their own they supposed.

One of Keigo’s feathers snatched the book from Himiko’s hand before she could flip it to the page he’d been reading, “hey! Maybe don’t pry into other people’s literature!” He said, feathers puffing up and a slight blush colouring his face.

They all laughed at Keigo’s embarrassment for a bit before the

conversation turned back to Izuku's friends. They gladly answered all the questions they were asked, smiling to themself when they realised that Hitoshi and Touya had the same taste in music, which would probably drive their friend insane if his reaction to being complimented earlier was any indication. And then they talked about Mei, her latest inventions, and that Himiko would love to meet her sometime, even though Izuku had a slight suspicion that such a meeting would end with a lot of pranks being played and glitter in everything.

For the rest of the day, everyone mostly did their own things. Being rescue heroes, Touya and Keigo weren't *required* to patrol, something they both took ample advantage of in order to stay in the media's blind spot. It also meant that they were the only people who, unless a major crisis happened nearby, were going to be at home the entire time they were babysitting Himiko and Izuku. So it also meant that they could spend the entire day watching the two children cause endless amounts of chaos until they tired themselves out, relaxed for a bit, then started over again.

Finally, night began to fall, and Himiko was the first to head to bed at around ten-thirty, despite being mildly nocturnal thanks to her quirk, it seemed that she'd exhausted herself already. Keigo was the next at nearly eleven, saying that he wanted to be up early tomorrow to go over to the cafe and grab the good buns before they all sold out. After a bit, it was just Izuku and Touya left in the living room.

Izuku stared out the window, their hand absentmindedly going to their locket. They didn't look up, even though they felt Touya approach, holding something. "Hey, Zuku."

They finally looked up, blinking in surprise as they realised he was holding two glasses of lemonade, "when did you?"

He shrugged, "me 'n Birdie keep a pitcher of the stuff in the fridge to cheer ourselves up after a rough day."

Izuku giggled, "so how'd you convince him to do that?" They asked, "last I checked lemon was *your* favourite flavour, not his," they said as they sipped the drink. It was on the sour side, which was nice, and Touya had a strange habit of throwing a bit of black pepper into it, which really wasn't as bad as it sounded.

Their brother shrugged, "well, a while ago I fiddled with the recipe a bit until we both liked it, and then it became literally the only drink

we could agree on, so...”

Izuku hummed, recognizing the cue to change topic, “you thought I needed cheering up?”

Touya paused, staring at his half-empty glass, “probably? I guess? Though if I’m being honest I needed it too.”

Izuku sighed, “maybe we should go to bed,” they muttered, finishing off the glass.

Touya followed suit before taking both glasses to the sink, “sure, wake me or Birdie up if either of you need anything, yeah?” Izuku knew he was mostly offering in case of a nightmare, since they and Himiko already knew where everything was in the apartment.

Izuku nodded and skipped over to the guest room they’d be sharing with Himiko.

Touya paused, holding the handle on the door to his and Keigo’s shared room, “good night Izuku,” he murmured, barely loud enough for them to hear.

“Good night Touya,” they whispered back.

Chapter End Notes

> A little bit filler, but I needed this scene and couldn't really fit it in a more important chapter so ¯\(-v-)/¯
>
> Also I know the chapter title is weird, it's close to midnight right now and I'm just trying to get this posted alright.

Chapter 91: Encounters.

Chapter Summary

> The big three run into some weird people during their internships.

Chapter Notes

> --- : POV switch

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tamaki ducked under the rock thrown at their head as they raced forward, weaving through the barrage of stone and dirt to reach the people nearby. They silently cursed their inability to fly above it all, if only they'd eaten some kind of bird that morning. Instead they manifested clam shells on their hands using the hard and sloped surface to act as a shield and an umbrella, allowing the debris to slide right past them. Perhaps they should just be thankful this wasn't a more powerful terrakinesis quirk, and that this villain didn't seem to be *trying* to cause any real damage, though collateral was still happening. Tamaki glanced back momentarily to where Fat Gum was dealing with the main problem. Part of them wished he'd let them help, both because they wanted to stop the villain, but slightly more so because being relegated to civilian control meant having to stay calm and collected while talking to people.

They quickly reached the unlucky couple who'd ended up on the wrong end of this growing dust storm, quickly escorting them out to the rest of the crowd. They did another scan for anyone else who could be in danger, but that seemed to be the last of them, so they deactivated their quirk and tried their best to blend into the corner they were standing in as they watched the fight. They looked over at the crowd for a moment, shivering at the sight of all the phones and cameras out to record the entire fight and post on the hellscape that was social media. They didn't really like the idea that it would one day be them in the spotlight like that.

Back when the year was first starting, Aizawa-sensei *had* suggested that if they really didn't like attention so much, they could consider a less public branch of heroics like rescue or even underground. But Nejire and Mirio were both aiming for the heights of limelight heroics, to save as many people as they could and be friendly faces to anyone

in need, and Tamaki wasn't about to get left behind.

It didn't take long for the fight to be over, Fat Gum easily won, using his body to immobilize the villain while the police handcuffed them. Tamaki took the chance to sneak over to his side, hiding from the majority of the crowd as the hero gave everyone a big grin and a wave, loudly telling them all to stay safe. He then turned to Tamaki, his voice lowering a bit, "well, that sure was something, didn't expect someone to cause trouble this early in the morning," he smiled, "did you manage alright Suneater?"

They nodded, it had turned out that Fat Gum was actually a really sweet guy, and all of Tamaki's fears of being stuck with someone who'd be too energetic for them to keep up with were entirely unfounded. Almost instantly they'd found that they could be as quiet as they wanted without being asked to respond to everything, but that didn't mean they were ignored and talked over either. The only thing they could consider irritating was the way that the hero constantly and very vocally disapproved of their self-deprecating humour. They didn't have a problem, well, maybe once they did but not anymore, though perhaps they shouldn't be so put off by him simply being concerned for them.

"You did pretty good from what I saw, not a single scratch on those people," the hero ginned proudly, "how about we stop by that one place to celebrate a job well done?"

Tamaki smiled, that sounded like a nice idea. The place he was referring to was a quiet little hole in the wall, and their food was pretty damn good as well, perfect for someone like them. But as they opened their mouth to respond, they heard a quiet gasp, and someone skipped up to the two of them. Tamaki automatically hid behind Fat Gum, hoping whoever it was would just get an autograph and leave. But such was not their luck.

"Hey! Amajiki, right?" Tamaki glanced, slightly mortified, at the speaker, it was that girl, the one that sometimes hung around the nurse's office back at UA.

"Uh, hello again," they said, awkward but able to push back the anxiety since they'd already embarrassed themself in front of this kid way too many times to care anymore.

"Are you busy?" The girl asked, her sharp fangs glinting as she gave them a toothy grin, though her eyes seemed to be darting about as if

looking for something.Tamaki blinked, “no, I guess?”

“You know this kid?” Fat Gum asked, to which Tamaki nodded but didn’t get to elaborate as the girl continued.

“Good, I just wanted to ask if you’ve seen anything strange around?” She smiled even wider, which was still incredibly disconcerting.

“Uh,” Tamaki shared a look with Fat Gum, who seemed exactly as confused as they were, “strange?”

The girl frowned, “aw, well I suppose you’re not exactly the right kind of person to be asking, but worth a shot. I guess you haven’t encountered any weird people either?”

Again, Tamaki was lost, because no, unless they counted this strange girl, “no, not that I’ve noticed.”

She looked like she wanted to keep asking weird questions, but another voice quickly called out, “Himiko! I told you not to run off!”

A white-haired boy who looked only a bit older than Tamaki walked up, and they could have sworn they’d seen him somewhere before, “sorry, was she bothering you?” The boy asked, looking incredibly exasperated.

Fat Gum laughed, “no no, it’s alright, she was just asking a few questions.” Either he was very good at acting, or he really wasn’t freaking out a bit about the slightly threatening nature of said questions.

The boy huffed, “still, sorry,” he muttered before tapping the girl on the head with his cane, “come on, gran’s going to get mad at us if we’re late!”

As soon as the pair were out of sight, Tamaki let out a sigh of relief. What was that girl talking about?

Mirio found that reports were probably one of the most annoying parts of hero work. For once, mostly because both Centipeder and Bubble Girl were busy, Sir Nighteye himself had offered to let Mirio shadow him for the day, with a warning that it’d be a bit boring. He’d said something about not wanting to let Mirio’s training slip just because his normal supervisors weren’t around. Of course, this meant that he was currently not patrolling the streets, instead he was sitting in the main office, zoning out as Nighteye talked to a detective about

some case or another.

A quiet tapping brought him back to reality, and he noted that Sir Nighteye seemed to be agitatedly drumming his fingers on the desk.

“I’m not entirely sure that’s warranted Nao,” he said tersely, oh, that’s right, these two were apparently friends.

The detective, Mirio wracked his brain but sadly couldn’t manage to find the name he was sure he’d heard, sighed, “it’s not about whether failure is likely or not Mirai, you know as well as I do that this is our better course of action.”

“It still seems like an unnecessary risk,” Sir Nighteye shook his head, “even if my quirk could *guarantee* that this would go well, I refuse to send one of my subordinates into that kind of situation.”

“Please, I wouldn’t be asking this if there was another way,” the detective seemed equally stressed, “our own officers can’t handle this task, and frankly I don’t think they can treat this with the delicacy it needs.” Mirio frowned, wondering to himself what on earth they could possibly be talking about.

Sir Nighteye raised an eyebrow, “oh what a shock,” he sniped sarcastically, “though the answer is still no.”

The tension in the air was so thick it could be cut with a butter knife, and Mirio was starting to feel like he should probably leave, preferably unannounced since both men looked like they might snap at him if he interrupted. So, thankful that he was in costume, he slipped through the floor and out to the street in front of the agency to get some fresh air. It was nearing the afternoon by now, and he figured that Centipeder should be nearby. So he decided to wait until the other hero could go figure out what was going on in there.

Really though, Sir Nighteye had been a great choice for his internships. All three heroes he was learning from were incredibly helpful in their own way, Bubble Girl was nice, and always happy to cheer everyone in the agency up when things got too serious. Centipeder was level-headed and the easiest to ask questions from and seemed to notice whenever Mirio was struggling with something. And Sir Nighteye himself, while certainly strict, always made it clear exactly why he was setting down these standards for Mirio to clear.

He suddenly saw the familiar silhouette of Centipeder round the corner, and he quickly ran up to him, “hey!”

The hero looked mildly amused, at least Mirio thought he did, it was kind of hard to tell on account of the bug features, “hello Lemillion, aren’t you supposed to be with Nighteye right now? Or are you sneaking off?”

Mirio chuckled, “kind of, Sir’s talking with a detective about, uh, something, I wasn’t actually paying attention, and it seemed like they were arguing about whatever it was, so I dipped.” He shrugged, noting the look of understanding and then resignation that crossed the hero’s face.

“Ah, I see, I have a good idea of what this is about, did the detective happen to be Tsukauchi Naomasa?” Centipeder asked.

Mirio’s brain lit up, right *that* was the detective’s name, “yeah! That’s the guy!” He said, snapping his fingers and grinning, before realizing something, “wait you know what’s going on?”

Centipeder clicked his mandibles together thoughtfully, “our agency has been assisting the good detective with a small matter, truly nothing you need to concern yourself with.”

Mirio frowned, “it didn’t sound like a ‘small matter’ to me.”

The hero sighed, perhaps about to try and discourage him from looking into this further with some half-hearted platitude, but then snapped to alertness for no discernible reason and pulled Mirio aside just as the sound of a gunshot rang out. Mirio yelped, frantically looking around for the source of the noise when he realised that Centipeder was *bleeding*.

“Shit, are you okay!?” He asked, but was quickly shut up.

“Get inside *now,* we don’t know if they’ve got another bullet.”

He hesitated a moment but before he could comply there was a thud from a nearby alleyway. Both of them looked to see a woman being tossed out to the ground, a gun skittering across the asphalt behind her as a smaller individual threatened her with a staff to her neck.

Just then, Sir Nighteye and the detective also came rushing out, both with weapons drawn, “what happened is everyone alright?” Sir Nighteye asked, and upon taking in the scene, sheathed the dagger he was holding into its hiding place in his jacket. After a moment Detective Tsukauchi did the same with his gun, pinching the bridge of his nose as he stared at the scene in front of him. Mirio was confused,

what were they doing? They didn't know who was the bad guy here! And the one who wasn't even showing their face seemed pretty suspicious if you asked him.

But then the stranger looked up, and that still didn't help since nearly their entire face was either in shadow or covered by a face mask. They silently knocked out the woman before allowing the detective to get near her. And then, to Mirio's slight alarm, the stranger proceeded to quickly and deftly disassemble the pistol without even hesitating. Meanwhile Sir Nighteye tried helping Centipeder, but was waved off with the assurance that the bullet hadn't even gone *near* anything vital.

Mirio looked around, panic clear on his face, "what just happened!? Who's that!?" He gestured at the stranger who was now walking over with the detective.

Sir Nighteye shook his head, "I'll explain what that was about later, I promise, and as for who that is-"

"They're a pest is what they are," Detective Tsukauchi grumbled, he jabbed a finger at the stranger, "this little bastard is Wraith, a local vigilante."

"A vigilante!?" Mirio's eyes widened, "but that's illegal!"

The detective just sighed wearily, causing Sir Nighteye to chuckle, "well, this one's proven themself to be reliable. Plus they've got a hero vouching for them and they're impossible to actually catch," the hero explained, "so most of the MPD and the local underground heroes just let them be."

The vigilante looked right at Mirio and gave a mock salute before darting off faster than he could react. What the hell was that about?

Nejire stretched her arms as she and Ryukyu headed back to the hero's agency for the end of patrol debrief they always did. Today had been kind of boring, not many villains were out and about, and while that was good because it meant people weren't in danger, she was still kind of antsy for some action, even if she wasn't the one fighting. She bounced around a bit, trying to burn off the excess energy while also trying her best not to trip up Ryukyu in the process, earning her a laugh from the dragon hero.

"Careful Nejire-chan, wouldn't want you to fall now!" Ryukyu smiled, giving her a pat on the head, though being careful not to displace

Nejire's carefully done hairdo.

Nejire pouted playfully before falling back into step with the hero, scanning the scenery and constantly reminding herself not to get distracted and fall behind as they passed by the forest. There were some pretty birds, a rabbit, flowers, all sorts of nice things. But still the day was awfully, utterly, *boring.* And she was never one to enjoy the quiet moments, that was more Tamaki's thing, she liked noise and energy, whether that be a party, a battle, or just her and her friends gossiping together.

And just when she was about to sigh tiredly because, oh you know, did she mention she was *bored.* Ryukyu seemed to perk up, causing her to look around frantically for whatever action the hero could possibly have seen. But then she realised that Ryukyu was holding her hand up to her ear, she was listening to her comm, and whatever she was hearing caused her to quickly beckon Nejire as she dashed into the woods. Nejire looked at the hero questioningly as they ran.

"I got a call for help," Ryukyu explained, "one of my fellow heroes sent an alert for assistance."

Nejire's eyes widened, "who?" She asked.

Ryukyu shook her head, "the alert just sends a specific tone and then coords to the closest comm working on the same network, aka, the nearest hero, so I don't know who sent it."

Nejire nodded as followed the hero to the location of the problem, and it wasn't a promising sight. It seemed a very large tree had fallen onto a cramped campsite, and about a dozen tents were destroyed with a dozen more having people visibly trapped inside. Ryukyu looked around a bit before beelining to one man in particular, presumably the other hero since he was in the middle of helping someone out of a tent. However, Nejire was struggling to place him, and she was certain she'd recognize *that* jacket if she'd ever seen it.

The man looked up, "Ryukyu! Perfect!" He called, his rough voice sounding relieved, "we've got civilians trapped in the tent, and I was going to ask whoever it was to help me cut the tents, but can you lift the tree?"

Ryukyu nodded, signalling for Nejire to help the other hero get the people out as she transformed into her dragon from and sunk her claws into the tree, straining with the weight as she flapped her wings to move it. And as soon as the other hero began helping people

clamber out of the tents, most with injures and broken bones where the tree had landed on a limb. Nejire quickly helped as many as she could, sometimes having to carry people on her back in order to not drag their injuries on the ground. They were hurrying by the last few tents as Ryukyu was visibly struggling to lift the tree, but thankfully they got everyone out.

The other hero gave Ryukyu a thumbs up and she dropped the tree with a grunt, landing on the ground as she transformed back into her more humanoid form. She and the other hero proceeded to check each one of the people to make sure they were okay and stayed until the paramedics arrived before taking their leave.

The other hero sighed, “fucking hell,” he muttered before turning to Ryukyu, “thanks for the help,” he looked at Nejire, “both of you.”

Nejire smiled, “it’s a hero’s duty!” She chirped, and the other hero laughed.

“You don’t even have your provisional yet, and you’ve already got the pitch down,” the other hero chuckled, and Nejire tilted her head, slightly confused on how he knew she wasn’t a work studies student.

Ryukyu noticed her confusion and smiled, “ah, right, Nejire-chan, this is Dabi, he’s one half of the hero duo Phoenix, they specialise in rescue and were mentored by Thirteen.”

Ah, that explained it, come to think of it, Kurose-sensei *did* mention they had some students they were still incredibly close to, this must be one of them. Dabi chuckled, “eh, sorry if I spooked you, your teacher just likes to talk about how proud they are of you,” he looked her over, “and I can say with confidence that they were absolutely right about how promising you are.”

Nejire giggled, “aw, thanks! I try to do my best to save everyone I can!”

Dabi and Ryukyu shared a look, “well then,” Dabi muttered, “I’m glad we got everyone this time.”

Nejire frowned, before realising just how small those tents were, and just how hard that tree must have fallen, any one of those people could have been killed on impact if they were in a slightly different spot. “Oh.”

Ryukyu sighed, “yes well, better not to dwell on the what-ifs,

everyone lived, and that's that."

Nejire smiled at that, "yeah! Everything's fine!"

That got a laugh out of Dabi, "jeez it's like looking at a mini Birdie."

Nejire giggled, but Ryukyu suddenly looked a bit distracted, "Dabi, where *is* your partner?" She seemed incredibly concerned for some reason.

Dabi's mood seemed to instantly sour at the question, "ah, right, that."

Ryukyu's eyes sharpened, "he hasn't been?"

"No, no," Dabi shook his head as if the mere suggestion was painful, "I'm going solo 'cause Hawks isn't doing any hero work right now, we agreed it was for the best considering, you know."

Ryukyu nodded sombrely, "indeed."

Nejire looked back and forth between the two heroes incredibly confused and slightly worried, "um, what's going on?"

Ryukyu startled as if remembering she was there at all, "oh, it's nothing child, just hero business." She shook her head as she called a quick goodbye to Dabi and hurried Nejire back towards the city, "it doesn't concern you anyway."

Nejire narrowed her eyes but didn't say anything. What on earth was going on?

Chapter End Notes

> Yay! The big three!! Poor babies are witnessing something they're not even remotely involved in.
>
> :}

Chapter 92: Trouble flies on silent wings.

Chapter Summary

Touya and Keigo's average day, nothing else.

Totally nothing else.

:}

Chapter Notes

--- : POV switch

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Touya yawned as he woke up to the familiar sound of warbling, and as pleasant as the noise was it was also *right in his ear*. He grumbled and flailed his hand around until he found and covered Keigo's mouth. "For fucks sake Birdie, what time even is it?" He asked, blinking the last bits of sleep from his eyes and turning to his roommate, it must have been insanely early if he, someone who got up at six-thirty on the dot, was being grumpy about waking up.

Keigo made a muffled sound, looking unimpressed as he tapped Touya's hand. Touya huffed and let go so he could speak, "thanks Ashes, anyway, I think it's, about three in the morning?" He tilted his head, his wings shifting a bit as he did so and causing Touya to get a face-full of feathers. Not that he minded of course, as he just gently pushed the wing away and back to its place as a makeshift blanket, pausing as he noticed they were slightly puffed up. "Keigo?"

Keigo froze at the use of his real name, recognizing that he'd been figured out, "yeah?"

"Nightmare?" Was all Touya asked, mostly because he was too sleepy to say more, and also because nothing more needed to be said.

Keigo sighed, every muscle in his body going limp, and that was all the answer Touya needed to understand. After the whole deal with Endeavour and the Commission had ended, the two of them had initially stayed in the two rooms, but since Touya's siblings weren't there anymore, it seemed that the only people left they could go to for comfort were each other. Nightmares mostly, so they ended up in the same bed more often than not on bad nights. And eventually they

stopped bothering to sleep in separate rooms in the first place if it just meant more of a hassle. Now it was more out of a sense of routine than any real need, but it was comfortable, so why change it.

Besides, the old purpose still came up every now and again, like it seemed to have done tonight.

Touya silently pushed Keigo's wing off himself, and his roommate got the hint pulling both his wings shut and effectively making him suddenly the smaller of the two, allowing Touya to easily pull him close. "G'night Birdie," he slurred out as sleep rapidly overtook him now that the problem had been dealt with, just before he lost consciousness he heard Keigo chuckling at his words.

Later, when it was an actually decent time to wake up, Touya stretched as he woke up properly this time, hopping out of bed and momentarily debating on whether to wake Keigo or not. But seeing as, aside from being an insanely light sleeper, his roommate was definitely *not* a morning person, he decided to let sleeping birds lie. Instead he went through his morning routine, made breakfast, and since Keigo was unusually still asleep, probably because he hadn't gotten any rest until earlier this morning, Touya just left a note on the table. And as much as he hated to leave Keigo alone with everything going on, he was safe in the knowledge that at least Keigo could fight any bastards that came after him.

Touya briefly paused, halfway through putting on his gloves, on second thought maybe it was better to be safe than sorry in a situation like this, so he snuck back into the bedroom and grabbed his feather earring, tucking it in his pocket before he left.

He checked the family group chat as he made his way downtown towards his siblings' place, noting that too many people had also been up at an ungodly hour last night. Uncle Ryo had been mediating a debate between Uncle Ken and Pops about Shakespeare's plays and their interpretations, and somehow half the family had gotten dragged into it. Touya personally thought that most of these idiots should have been resting, they only got home last week, and nobody ever wants to deal with what they had to deal with.

He shook his head, hurrying over to the estate. Once there he rang the doorbell as a warning before climbing into the first floor living room through an open window. Fuyumi glared at him for that choice, wordlessly pointing back at the entryway as a silent *'get your dirty boots off my damn carpet.'* Touya ducked his head sheepishly, obliging

her request before taking a seat next to her, looking over at what she was writing, which appeared to be a grocery list.

“Hey Yumi, congrats on the TA job,” he muttered, giving her a lopsided grin as he took the chance to put on his earring, “how was your first day dealing with a bunch of screaming toddlers?”

She smiled at that, “surprisingly well, the teacher even pulled me aside after class and said I have a real way with kids.”

He hummed, “well that’s hardly surprising,” they both trailed off for a moment before Fuyumi laughed, breaking the silence.

“Yes, I suppose that’s one good thing that came out of having to take care of Natsu and Shoto.”

“Speaking of Shoto, where is he right now?” Touya was surprised the kid hadn’t been waiting for him, considering today they were supposed to be training together.

Fuyumi rolled her eyes fondly, “I bet he got distracted, he was with Natsuo, they were playing games in Natsu’s room.”

Touya chuckled, “alright, I’ll just have to surprise them then,” he said.

He stood up and went upstairs to knock on the door to his brother’s room, “oi dipshits, did you forget something?” He called through the closed door.

Suddenly the sounds of competitive gaming stopped, and the door opened as Shoto ran out exclaiming, *“Touya!!”* Followed shortly by Natsuo who pulled Touya into a hug.

Touya tried to greet them both back, but Shoto was already beginning to pull him towards the training room, so he sent an apologetic look at Natsuo before following Shoto to what was probably his favourite and least favourite room in the mansion. Though honestly, the ‘favourite’ part had outweighed the ‘least favourite’ part long ago since there wasn’t anyone to mess up his opinion of this place anymore.

The two of them trained for a while, Shoto was getting a lot better with his flames, and now you couldn’t even tell that he’d been neglecting half his quirk for a good portion of his life. It was never quite said out loud, but Shoto always knew how proud Touya was of him, he made *damn* sure of that.

But around halfway through what he'd planned for the day, Touya felt the feather move, tugging lightly at his ear. He stopped dead in his tracks, nearly getting hit by a chunk of ice that was melted by Shoto, whose eyes were wide as he stared at his brother. "Is something wrong?" He asked.

Touya didn't say anything, but his hand went to his earring and he hoped that was enough of an answer as he grabbed his phone from the bench in the corner of the room and quickly dialled Keigo's number. He ran out to the living room followed quickly by Shoto as the call went dead, he tried again, and again, now with both Fuyumi and Natsuo's eyes on him. "Shit," he muttered, before glancing at his siblings, "I gotta go, Keigo's in trouble."

Admittedly, Keigo hadn't been quite as on guard as he should have been, but he'd had that horrible nightmare, and woken up to find that Touya had already left for his siblings' mansion, with the earring no less. So he was a bit grumpy, and even the threat that had been looming overhead ever since their family got roped into this investigation wasn't enough to keep him alert. Actually, a lot of heroes had gotten roped into this investigation. He *still* thought that Ryo was somewhat insane for joining, even if his skills were sorely needed.

But the point was that he was off his game, something which he really shouldn't have been.

So when he did something incredibly inadvisable and stupid and went for a walk in the park to clear his head, paying no mind to the fact that he'd wandered away from any people, he really should have expected something like this.

Keigo hissed at the people in the shadows, the afternoon light doing nothing to show their features as they all hid deliberately. Though that didn't matter as he already knew who they were, or at least who they worked for, and he knew that if he didn't find a way out of his current predicament he was about to join a list of names he really didn't want to be on. He sharpened his feathers, wriggling to try and cut the heavy metal net someone had thrown on him, binding his limbs and wings in place, the holes were too small for him to slip a feather through as well, the clever bastards had thought of a lot.

He just hoped there was *something* they could have missed.

The group quickly approached, and someone tried to kick him, he bit through the person's boot and felt sick satisfaction at the taste of

blood that trickled in, even giving the idiot a feral grin as they cried, “damn you *beast!*”

“Don’t bother,” a voice said as another person went to try and grab at him, “we’re sedating this one.”

Keigo felt a chill down his spine as he felt something sharp prick his arm. He began thrashing around wildly and finally got free of the net, his wings flaring out and catching several of the people near him with their sharp edges. But there wasn’t anything he could do, whatever they gave him, it was strong, and his resistance to these things had waned since he wasn’t under the Commission’s brutal training anymore. He did the next best thing and sent out his feathers grievously injuring many of his attackers before trying to fly. But he got nowhere as his wings were uncoordinated and his movements became sluggish. Landing roughly on his back, he went for a last-ditch effort and reached out for any remaining feathers to use as weapons, when he registered that one was awfully far away.

The earring.

If he wasn’t going to win this fight, the least he could do was call for help, so even as his mind began to cloud, he pulled at the feather, hopefully telling Touya something had happened.

He heard laughter and looked up to see the people standing over him. With his last bit of consciousness, he spat at them, earning nothing but condescending blankness from those god damn skull masks.

Chapter End Notes

> Say hello to the CRC everyone! Bet you forgot these fuckers existed.
>
> And if this feels like a tone switch, it is!
>
> The main players are all gathered (even if one's not quite in his place yet), the stage is set, time for the anime-style story arcs to begin!

Chapter 93: An interesting idea.

Chapter Summary

Izuku wants to help get Keigo back.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku was *furious*, everyone was really. All of them knew what the risks were with the CRC, but they'd thought they'd taken all the precautions they could. They sighed, there was no accounting for mistakes of course, and that was what Keigo had made, a very big mistake.

Of course, it wasn't like they had much of a choice in incurring the CRC's wrath, what with that particular branch getting extremely bold and even beginning to commit murders and kidnappings all across the country. All the victims were heteromorphs of course. It had turned into a multi-city operation to take down the bastards who were now awaiting trial for their crimes. However, actions had consequences, and everyone who took part in the operation was now a target for other branches of the CRC to go after.

Case in point, while Keigo had not participated for obvious reasons, he was publicly connected to Bibi Anan, who *had* participated as part of the rescue team for the kidnapped heteromorphs. And that meant that, even though the CRC historically took more caution when it came to heteromorph heroes, this was a chance to both send a message and get leverage.

And a message they did send, because that very morning as Izuku sat here, in their room, uselessly contemplating the situation, and most of their family was scrambling to figure out what to do, Touya had found a bloody feather at the door of his apartment. It wasn't Keigo's thankfully, Izuku suspected that whoever the people were that were in charge of keeping him prisoner knew better than to let a feather get loose like that. However the intent was still clear, as a few other heroes had gotten similar threats after their heteromorph loved ones were recently kidnapped, this was a hostage situation, drop the charges, and your friends and family go free.

They stared at the picture of the sparrow feather in the family group chat. Well, *they* couldn't identify the feather exactly, but Natsuo knew a scary amount about birds, and bats, and dogs, and all the various species Nedzu's DNA was made up of, honestly he could be a vet if he wanted.

Unfortunately, it was a pretty widespread bird, nothing helpful there to pinpoint exactly which group in the CRC had done this kidnapping. And some part of them all definitely wanted to give into the threat, to agree to try and convince the people in charge of the trial to drop it, one or two others already had, not that Izuku could blame them. However, not only was staying strong the right thing to do, Keigo would hate them if they gave up on the chance to gut one of the biggest hate groups in the country. The plan was instead to try and get Keigo back without giving the CRC any warning or time to prepare

Still, Izuku was feeling quite useless in the whole matter. They understood that they couldn't do much, there were enough actual heroes in this family to pull this mission off without help, but they still wanted to. They stared at the text messages on their phone, contemplating whether they could go visit someone to take their mind off of this. Shoto was immediately a no, he'd practically thrown himself into training because of the same useless feeling they had. Tenya would understand, but he wasn't the best at comforting others, and he'd accepted that he wouldn't be able to help from moment one. And Himiko was just terrified of something happening to her dad.

And then there was the last option, Hitoshi and Mei had nothing to do with any of this, and they didn't want to throw their troubles at their friends. But perhaps they'd make for a good distraction, if pressed they could tall some half-truth about their brother's roommate being in trouble, or maybe lie and say he was sick. Izuku opened the group chat.

Cryptid Activity

5:47 PM

Hell spawn: *Hey, are you two free?*

Existential Dread: *Ye, y?*

Hell spawn: *Meet me at the abandoned factory?*

safety hazard: *is something wrong? (｡•́□•̀｡)*

Hell spawn: *No.*

Hell spawn: *Kinda.*

Existential Dread:*That doesn't sound 2 gd.*

safety hazard: *we'll be there! (｡• ◡ •｡)つ♡*

Existential Dread: *I'll bring blankets.*

safety hazard: *and i've got snacks!*

Hell spawn: *Thanks guys, you're the best.*

Izuku sighed as they closed the chat, sending a quick text to their papa, hoping they weren't interrupting anything too important in the meeting, that they were going to hang out with their friends, getting a thumbs up in return.

They debated grabbing a notebook, but it probably wouldn't even be opened, and they'd hate for something to happen to it because they got too emotional and carelessly put it somewhere damp or something.

So they just grabbed the spare key from its hiding place and said goodbye to Shadow and Mop, promising that their parents would be back soon to give them all the attention they wanted.

And with that, Izuku locked the apartment and hurried down the street, taking the ten minutes it took to get to the factory, if they weren't running that was, as a way to get their story straight in the event they'd have to say something. Though the walk itself did help calm their nerves. Their family was amazing, and they'd managed to get through every crisis so far, they could probably do this. But it was hard to fight the little voice in their brain, the one that reminded them of that old lesson they'd learnt back on the street, don't expect anything, it can all go wrong in a heartbeat.

They tried so hard to shove the image of what they might find of Keigo if they were too late out of their mind, but it was difficult when there was nothing else to think about.

The factory was a strangely welcoming sight, for all it was an eyesore in the middle of this perfectly nice neighbourhood, it still comforted them.

It couldn't be the structure itself causing that feeling, because they'd found it ages ago and never used it, being reminded too much of their old warehouse. So the obvious conclusion was that the feeling was because of Hitoshi and Mei who, along with Izuku, had claimed it as their own special place, somewhere for the three of them to just exist outside of anything else. It wasn't that they were running away from anything, well maybe Hitoshi was, but it was more that they liked having some time to themselves every once in a while.

They hummed as they made their way through the back alley and to the storage unit. There was no doubt that Hitoshi and Mei would be here already, since it was a bit closer to their apartment building than it was to Izuku's. They closed the door behind them, which was something they could do now thanks to some *slightly* dubious modifications courtesy of Mei.

Mei and Hitoshi were already there, having made a nest of blankets in the only corner not cluttered by junk, both of them instantly spotted Izuku, "Izu!" Mei called, jumping into their arms in greeting, "do you wanna tell us what's wrong?"

They giggled and set her down as Hitoshi walked up, "it's really nothing, I'm just being stupid." They signed, though it really wasn't 'nothing' at all.

Hitoshi hugged them tightly, "you're sounding an awful lot like me," he muttered, and they laughed even harder at that.

"How have you two been anyway?" They asked.

Mei tutted, waving her finger at them, "nuh-uh, you don't get to dodge the question."

They stuck their tongue out at her before sighing, "so, remember I told you about my brother's roommate? Well, he got into some trouble and was pretty hurt, and I guess I'm just worried about him."

"Trouble?" She frowned, "what kind of trouble?"

Izuku didn't want to let that little detail slip, so they just said something vague "there's some assholes around where he lives who like to bully people they don't like. He got on their bad side, they decided to get back at him by kicking his ass." They kicked a screw in frustration, "I can't even do anything to help the situation, since the adults have everything under control, and won't let me *near* those fuckers." They settled into the blanket nest, with their friends on

either side.

Hitoshi turned to them, casually throwing an arm over them while making sure they could still sign, “oh, *that’s* what it is,” he shook his head, “I get that, being helpless is the worst.”

They saw an opportunity to change the subject and pounced, “oh, are we going to get the dark and tragic backstory?” They teased.

Hitoshi scoffed, “you guys already know that.”

Mei chimed in, “yeah, the stuff about that bitch of a woman you had to call mother, but we don’t know about the rest of it!”

Hitoshi looked between them, sighing, “fine.”

He paused for a moment before he began to speak, “so, you guys know I got bullied, and by proxy so did dad, obviously, I mean, we still do, but back then, I,” he cringed as if it was physically painful for him to say it, “I wasn’t strong enough to stand up for myself.”

Izuku winced as they felt an alarming familiarity with where this was going, Hitoshi continued, “let’s just say I let a lot of things happen to me because I was too fucking *scared* to fight back.”

Mei huffed, “that’s not your fault Toshi, I mean, everyone’s been at that point sometime in their lives, right?” And upon realising the other two were staring at her she coughed nervously, “I was like that too until I was like, ten, eleven? No matter how much my mothers pushed me to defend myself, I just couldn’t bring myself to drop the bad friends I had, ‘cause even though they mostly kept me around as a joke, they still kept me around.”

Hitoshi stared at her incredulously, “don’t you feel embarrassed about it?” He asked.

Mei hummed, shifting around in the cuddle pile, “not really? Do you?” She gasped, “is *that* why you don’t like when we point out that you like ‘uncool’ things!?”

Hitoshi hid his face in Izuku’s hair, causing them to let out a disgruntled noise of surprise, “shut up Mei, stop reading me like that!”

Mei laughed, “oh my gosh it *is*,” she shook her head, “well that’s stupid Toshi, you can be tough while liking cats and stuff!”

Hitoshi eventually sighed, looking up again, “you don’t understand,” he muttered, shaking his head, “whatever, we weren’t here for my problems, Izuku’s the one whose family’s in trouble!”

Izuku smiled, “I’m feeling better now, but we can absolutely stay like this for a while.”

Mei grinned, “I brought snacks!” She held up a pack of sour gummies, Izuku’s eyes lit up as she shared the candy around, and the three of them began chatting about whatever came to their minds like usual.

Hitoshi hummed, “hey have you guys heard about the disappearances lately?”

Izuku perked up at that, “you mean the ones with all heteromorph victims?” They asked, knowing that those were the only noteworthy disappearances he could possibly be bringing up.

He nodded, “yeah, it’s weird, I’m pretty sure there’s a hate crime going on since there’s a rumour going around that folks had seen people in masks wherever the disappearances happened."

Mei frowned, “people in masks doing hate crimes? I think I read something like that in my history textbooks.”

Hitoshi nodded, “the Creature Rejection Clan, they’re supposed to have been almost entirely eradicated by now of course.” That wasn’t entirely true, while that might have happened at some point, these groups were basically like cockroaches, no matter how hard you tried to kill them, they always sprung up again somewhere.

Though, that did give Izuku an idea, rumours were actually pretty good sources of information if you knew how to sift out the bullshit, and going to look for those wouldn’t actively put them in the way of the CRC. So maybe, just maybe, they could go sneak around some of the usual hotspots and see if they could pick up anything useful for the investigation. Chances were unlikely it would actually prove helpful, since any non-limelighter in their family would be doing something similar, but it sounded better than sitting with their dread until this was resolved.

Besides, what’s the worst that could happen?

Chapter End Notes

Izuku's on the case! Let's see if they turn up anything useful, (hint:

they're the main character)

Also I wrote this in the middle of the night, apologies if it seemed weird at some points, I genuinely cannot be assed to go back and fix it.

Chapter 94: Information? Or something better?

Chapter Summary

Izuku goes hunting for information about the CRC

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It wasn't like they didn't have permission, Izuku thought as they parkoured over the rooftops, they were allowed solo patrols once in a while, ever since they turned thirteen. But those were on quiet nights, and they were never allowed to go further than one block away from the apartment. It had taken a lot of begging, as well as allowing Bibi Higari to put a tracker in their suit, for them to be allowed out tonight, not that they minded, they were only going around a bit to see if they could hear anything unusual.

So far, they'd had very little luck, any rumours that started led them right back to what they already knew, so they decided to sit down, or rather pace a circle, and figure out the clues they had. They wished they had something to write on, to organize their thoughts before they lost them, but they didn't carry more than they needed to in their vigilante costume, and the utility belt around their waist was filled with medical supplies.

One, the CRC were probably keeping Keigo somewhere within or near Musutafu, that made the most sense, though it wasn't a confirmed fact. Two, they had to have someone with a quirk capable of covering their tracks since Uncle Ryo hadn't been able to find, *anything* past a spot in the park, presumably where he was ambushed. Three, they were keeping him either sedated or dampened, since Touya's attempts to contact Keigo through the feather earring had failed. Four, they also had something that could interrupt a quirk like Ragdoll's, a cloaking quirk maybe? Something to suppress Keigo's quirk signature. Five, various branches of the CRC had been able to do this to multiple heteromorphs. Six, this was a co-ordinated plan. The last two combined meant that it was likely the same few people doing the actual kidnapping. Seven, they knew who some of these people were, unfortunately that didn't help as most of them had 'disappeared'

shortly before this operation, and the ones that didn't hadn't cracked yet.

They let out a frustrated huff and kicked one of the rocks in their path, watching as it bounced across the concrete. They winced a bit at the noise, barely audible, but for someone like them it was far too much, they needed to be more careful, unless they wanted someone to know they were lurking.

There were a few more leads to check up on that weren't actively being pursued by other heroes, but they were starting to think this would be a rather fruitless patrol and they'd have to go home with nothing. There weren't even any random crimes they'd come across to stop, it seemed like whichever one they spotted, some other hero had it already covered, and they'd promised not to get into unnecessary or unwinnable fights. It was annoying, but at least they hadn't yet had to pick between getting beat up or letting a civilian get hurt. Time and time again their family, particularly their parents and Aunt Nemuri for some reason, emphasized that they weren't allowed to be too self-sacrificing until after they became a pro hero. They'd been getting better at it, they thought, though their family didn't quite agree.

They mentally sighed and continued on their way, taking a winding route past some usual hotspots, stopping just short of the three kilometre mark, grumbling to themself at being only slightly unrestricted in their search. But three was all they could bargain to, so three it was. They shook their head, turning around as they decided to go around the perimeter of where they were allowed to roam a bit, hoping to find anything before they returned to the centre and fanned out from there.

They unfortunately didn't seem to find anything interesting, so they frowned to themself and began making their way back to their apartment. From there they went in a different direction, going clockwise and trying to balance covering the entire area with the fact that they only had so much time and energy to give before they were exhausted. But they still found nothing, along the perimeter, back to centre, and out again, and along the perimeter, and back to centre, and over and over.

By now they were getting really pissed off, how in the hell had they not found a single clue yet, not even something remotely useful! They were halfway through their eighth round and was starting to feel exhaustion creeping up, and they were only a third of the way done, they wouldn't be able to cover the whole thing tonight.

They sat down for a moment as they reached into their utility belt to pull out the snack their papa had given them. They usually carried an energy bar with them, something that wouldn't get destroyed if they got hit wrong. But since tonight they shouldn't be getting into too many fights, they had some homemade biscuits in a ziplock bag, good for a short-term boost, which was what they needed in order to comfortably make it back home. Not that it mattered, they were fine with or without it, this would just stop them being hungry by the time they got there.

They hummed as they snapped one between their teeth, munching happily, there were definitely good sides to Papa's habit of stress baking, tasty treats being one. But then their ears caught the sound of yelling nearby, and whoever it was sounded young. They shoved the rest of the sweet in their mouth and put the rest back in their belt as they darted towards the noise.

As they got closer they realised with a jolt of slight alarm that they *knew* that voice, though they hadn't heard it since the last time Tenya took them to a party.

They hurried to the edge of the rooftop and sure enough there were two people cornering a young boy in an alley who was trying to interrogate them about, the CRC!?

'What in the everloving fuck is Monoma doing here!?' They thought as they leapt down, using their weight to knock down one of the people, a willowy lady who summoned a glowing shield around herself, though she was still knocked out from the fall. They turned to parry a blow from the lady's startled friend who seemed to summon knives out of thin air, oh that wasn't good in the slightest.

Oh fuck, they mentally cursed as they ran from a volley of knives that appeared and were thrown at them with startling accuracy. They braced themself as they realised they were about to get sliced by one, when suddenly they were blocked by someone, their eyes widened as their mind raced with the possibility that someone had just gotten stabbed for them. And then they heard the clattering of the knife falling harmlessly to the ground.

They looked back up and realised it was Monoma who had blocked it, and he was covered in the same glowing shield the lady had, he must have used his quirk on her after she was knocked out.

Izuku took the chance to throw the knife right back at the other

person's leg, forcing them to dodge as Izuku rushed forward and knocked them out with their staff.

They checked both people quickly for injuries, and to make sure they were actually downed, and was about to run off again when Monoma called out, "wait!"

Izuku stopped, turning around long enough for Monoma to get out a question, "you're Wraith, right? My, someone I know, has spoken of you."

That made sense, Copycat *was* an underground hero after all, their tilted their head, waiting for him to continue.

"Have you heard anything about the Creature Rejection Clan lately?" Monoma asked and now Izuku remembered, Copycat was one of the heroes on the mission, had she been blackmailed as well?

They lifted their hands, "do you know sign?" They asked, even though they knew he did, they couldn't look too suspicious.

Monoma nodded, "yes, I do, now tell me."

"Why do you want to know?"

Monoma paused, seemingly weighing his options, Izuku decided to make the decision for him, "someone you know got kidnapped?"

He seemed startled, "so you *do* know something!"

"I know an untrained kid shouldn't be running around looking for answers," that was more than a little hypocritical, but hey, they did specify 'untrained.'

Monoma scoffed, "I'll have you know I can hold my own perfectly well." Maybe in theory, as a legacy kid he certainly would know at least the basics of how to fight, but all that yelling earlier had made it clear this boy had never seen an ounce of real combat in his life.

Izuku shook their head, "sorry, I'm not dragging you into this."

"Well that doesn't matter!" Monoma exclaimed, "if I don't do this, if I don't find him..."

"You know a hero who's getting blackmailed, don't you?" Izuku grinned under their mask, knowing they'd hit the nail on the head.

Monoma took a deep breath before nodding, holding out his hand, “Monoma Neito, son of the hero Copycat,” he introduced himself, “my mother is going to accept the deal.”

Izuku frowned, choosing not to shake the offered hand despite wearing gloves, they weren’t chancing it, “and you’re getting involved because?”

“Because it’s the CRC! They cannot be allowed to walk free!” Monoma stomped his foot, looking surprisingly childish before he composed himself, “and besides, you cannot stop me, so what’s it going to be vigilante? I’ll trade you information.”

Izuku stared at him for a long moment before sighing, fuck it, if he was this determined, “I’m afraid I don’t have much that the heroes don’t already know, tonight’s been kind of a bust.”

“I don’t care, there must be *something!*”

Izuku tilted their head, “fine, you first.”

Monoma tried to stare them down, but unfortunately for him, they were very good at staring contests, and not being able to see their eyes likely enhanced the effect. He was the first to look away.

“I don’t know how credible it is, but I heard rumours that they’re going to strike again soon, but, well we already knew that.” He shook his head, “and I don’t know where or when.”

Izuku held back a huff, “that’s about the same that I got, and you’d be hard pressed to separate it from plain old mass panic.”

Monoma nodded, but then looked thoughtful for a moment, “well, if I happen to run into you again,” Izuku took that to mean he’d go looking for them, “perhaps we could trade again?”

“Playing vigilante is a dangerous game you know,” they cautioned, “I hope you know what you’re doing.”

“I can’t just stand by and watch.”

Oh, Izuku knew that feeling all too well, it was what fuelled most of their good deeds. “I’ll find you,” they finally said, turning and running away, it seemed they’d just gained an informant.

Chapter End Notes

There he is! There's the last of the 'main' characters!

Took him long enough.

Chapter 95: Unintentional actions.

Chapter Summary

Hitoshi and Mei run into some trouble.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hitoshi stomped through the hallway towards his classroom, anger clear in his every move. He could hear people whispering behind his back even more than usual, wondering if today was the day he would finally snap and commit a crime, or maybe brainwash someone to do a crime for him. But really, he was just pissed that his people seemed to be utterly useless right now, his dad was being unreasonably soft, Izuku hadn't shown up to the factory in days, and Mei was busy with her latest inventions. Combine that with an overall shitty week that he had nobody to rant to about, and he was just completely done with everything.

And then there were those damn kidnappings.

It wasn't a well known thing yet, but Hitoshi heard the rumours, in person as well as on the forums he frequented, about the Creature Rejection Clan resurfacing. Something in that boiled his blood. He wouldn't consider himself someone who poked his nose where it didn't belong, but discrimination, especially the violent kind, was something he always hated, being a victim of it himself.

The worst part of it all was that nobody seemed to care. Nobody was worried about a literal fucking hate group making a resurgence after years of being thought to be eradicated, just because they weren't the targets. He wanted to punch someone, but he couldn't, not unless he wanted to get in trouble, he couldn't even get the stupid muzzle off his face to yell at these bastards.

So he sat through the day's lessons, his mind in an entirely different place as he tried to not get in trouble for something stupid.

And then, *finally* the last bell of the day rang, signalling freedom from the hell that was school. Hordes of children flooded the halls, though Hitoshi had no issue moving through them, as people parted to avoid the 'dangerous villain', allowing him a bubble of personal space while all the others had to shove through the crowd of bodies. There were

quite a few perks to being feared after all, though he'd prefer if they feared him for any reason other than his quirk.

He quietly pulled out his phone, opening his messages and texting a quick question to the group chat to check if anyone was free to hang out. His dad wouldn't be home from work yet, and he didn't really want to stay in an empty apartment for hours, scrolling on the internet. He supposed he should be used to that by now, and it wasn't like he was ungrateful; they were lucky his dad got a decent job at all, what with having someone like *him* as a son.

He checked his phone again as he heard it buzz, Izuku had replied apologizing that they were busy. That was getting annoyingly common, they kept giving excuses but seriously, they lived *twenty* minutes away, would it kill them to just drop by sometime? Hitoshi took a breath, no, that wasn't fair, Izuku wouldn't just ghost him and Mei like that, they probably had very good reasons for not showing up.

His phone buzzed again, and this time it was Mei, eagerly agreeing to hang out, which was a relief considering how much time she'd been spending cooped up in her apartment, not that he had any room to judge.

He sent her back a thumbs up and told Izuku everything was fine. He put the muzzle back in the locker, speeding up his walking as he noticed some of his classmates approach. He wasn't going to resort to violence, though it really was a shame, he'd *love* to show these fuckers exactly what he'd learned, maybe someday, hopefully soon.

By the time he got to the gates, his classmates were uncomfortably close, so he rounded on them, an unimpressed look on his face as he glared at them all, "hello."

One of his classmates began to say something, but then all of them got awfully pale and began to back off. Hitoshi grinned wickedly, oh finally, he'd scared them off all on his-

"Hi Toshi!" Never mind.

"Hi Mei," he grumbled, his pride knocked completely flat, "you got here quick."

"Figured someone would try something," she fixed his retreating classmates with a look that suggested she *really* wanted to go beat them up.

He rolled his eyes, holding her hand to drag her away from the crowd. She followed happily, humming some odd tune as she reached in her bag and pulled out a small thing she fidgeted with in her free hand.

Hitoshi surreptitiously glanced around to make sure nobody was looking at them before whispering, “what’s that?”

Mei held it out for him to examine, it appeared to be a small switch of some kind, “it’s nothing special on its own, just a component for one of my babies, but it’s going to do great things once I get it to work!” He grimaced, that tone of voice only meant one thing, and that was a whole lot of late night explosions as Mei pulled too many all-nighters to get this thing to work right.

“And the intended effect is?”

“A multitool for me to use on the go!” She exclaimed, “it probably won’t be as good as my normal tools, but this way I won’t have to carry my toolbox everywhere I go!” And by toolbox she meant that duffle bag of scraps she was always hauling around, he glanced at it, wondering what was inside today. Honestly, Hitoshi was starting to feel odd about being the only person in the group who didn’t carry a bag all the time.

After a few moments, he kind of tuned out her rambling, not that he wanted to, it was actually kind of interesting once he figured out how to understand it, it was just that his mind kept going back to other things.

Mei eventually noticed, stopping dead in her tracks as she stared at him, “what’s on your mind?”

“You remember the kidnappings?”

She hummed, “you mean that thing you and Izu were talking about last week?”

He nodded, “it’s just been bothering me I guess.”

“Why?”

“Because it’s not even on the news, and that’s not right and, just, *ugh*,” he stomped his foot in anger, “the world is fucking stupid and I hate it.”

He felt Mei’s hand squeeze his, “shouldn’t the police be doing

something?"

He gave her a deadpan look, "are you serious?"

She shrugged, "yeah yeah, but, y'know, you'd think they'd at least *pretend* to be doing their jobs."

He opened his mouth to explain exactly why that didn't matter in a situation like this, but he was cut off by the sound of crashing coming from nearby. Mei instantly ran forward, and Hitoshi yelped, following her. "Hey! Where are you going!?"

"To check out the noise? Duh."

"If we get killed because of this I'm blaming you."

"Fair enough."

The two of them ran forward until they neared the area, Hitoshi slid to a halt, pulling Mei back with him and covering her mouth with his hands for a moment to stop her indignant cry as he began to whisper. "We don't know what it is, I'll see if I can find out, you stay put." Looks like he was about to put those stealth lessons to use after all, he thought, leaving his backpack behind and searching for the sound.

He tried to remember everything Izuku had taught him as he approached a corner, going as slow as he could as he carefully picked his way around. He paused as he finally managed to get to the corner, pressing his back to the concrete of the building as he glanced back at Mei, giving her a thumbs up. Okay, time to figure out what the hell was going on around here.

He glanced around the corner, and oh shit did they just walk in on a crime scene? He felt his heartrate pick up at the sight, a man in a skull mask was standing over a body of someone, were they unconscious or dead? But one thing was certain, this was one of the people doing the kidnappings. Shit he needed to leave. But before he could even move, the man in the skull mask looked up, staring directly at him.

Hitoshi yelped, ducking his head as a burst of energy singed the corner he was just peeking around. He turned just long enough to notice that Mei had now sprinted up beside him before the man had rounded the corner and was now charging another blast.

Suddenly, Mei reached into her bag and tossed out one of her reusable bombs, this one appeared to be filled with pink smoke, and it caused

the man to miss his energy attack, though it still hit Mei's leg, causing her to fall. Hitoshi was properly panicking now, what the hell was he supposed to do with something like this!? He couldn't just leave Mei here, but he wasn't strong enough to carry her and run fast enough to get away.

His eyes landed on the bag, his hand closed around the first thing it found as he swung it wildly at the man through the rapidly dissipating smoke, closing his eyes in fear.

He felt his improvised weapon catch onto something, and a grunt of pain let him know he'd hit his mark.

The man tried to grab him, but months of training finally kicked in and he dodged out of the way. Okay, shit, what was the thing Izuku had told him? He glanced at his fist as the man began charging up again. Oh right, aim for the chin. Hitoshi put his whole body into the swing.

Crack

He panted heavily as he saw the man drop to the ground, unconscious. He glanced at Mei, who was standing up and limping over to him, "what, the fuck?"

She shrugged, though her wide eyes gave away her terror, "no idea, I think you just knocked out a guy."

"I, *I did?*" The world felt a bit distant at the moment, so he couldn't really tell, but yeah, he had, he'd knocked out a full-grown man.

There was a groaning noise and Hitoshi glanced away to see that the person who'd been knocked out, not killed thankfully, had begun to wake up.

He felt Mei grab him and limp as fast as she could. His brain finally caught up with the situation and he helped her so they could run as far as they could before they were spotted.

Once they had ducked into an alleyway, Hitoshi leaned against the wall, trying to catch his breath while comprehending, holy shit he just won a fight, what the hell. *He* just *won* a *fight*. He looked at Mei who was putting the pieces of her bomb back together and stuffing them in her bag. He glanced at the thing he'd taken from it, which turned out to be a screwdriver, and held it out wordlessly for her to take. She quickly cleaned the specks of blood off it before putting it back.

“Hey Mei?”

“Hm?” Her voice was just as wobbly as his.

“I think we’re in a lot of trouble.”

Did he just do vigilantism? He was pretty sure knocking out a potential kidnapper counted as vigilantism.

After a while of just trying to catch their breath, the two of them made their way back home, pointedly ignoring whatever the fuck had just happened in favour of continuing to talk about Mei’s newest project.

As they neared the apartment building though, Hitoshi glanced back at his hands, that was terrifying, yes, but, he’d done it, he’d saved someone.

“I could help.” He said suddenly.

Mei turned to him, a pained frown on her face, “what exactly do you mean, ‘help’?”

“Well no-one else is taking this seriously!” Hitoshi snapped, though his anger was not at her, “people are going to get hurt. But, I just stopped that. If, if nobody else is going to do something about these kidnappings, then maybe I will.”

Mei’s eyes widened, “you’re not seriously suggesting you’re going full vigilante about this?”

He nodded, “that’s exactly what I’m saying.”

Mei looked at her duffle bag for a moment, “what’s our plan?”

“*Our* plan?” Hitoshi asked.

She gave him a determined grin, “well, I’m not about to let you do this alone, now am I? Besides, we’d have been fried without my baby,” she held up the bomb, “so I’m joining you on this, whatever this is.”

Hitoshi took a deep breath, “alright, let’s save some people.”

Chapter End Notes

Well well well, look what we have here, a couple of amateur

vigilantes?

Good thing there's someone with experience around, now the question is whether they'll figure it out before they get themselves in too deep.

Chapter 96: Investigative vigilantism.

Chapter Summary

Neito goes chasing a lead.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Neito was starting to get frustrated at the lack of progress he was making in his investigation. He paced around his room, a pile of paper sitting on his bed, each one with rumours scrawled all over them. He twirled a pen between his fingers as he tried in vain to piece together everything he knew.

One week, one full week and he still didn't have anything useful to show. He was just glad his mother was still debating on accepting the deal, or rather, that her colleagues had been pressuring her to stand her ground. But how long would that last? How long until she gave up and cast her lot in with the others who'd bowed? The friend in question wasn't even one that Neito knew all that well, perhaps that was strange considering how important said friend was to his mother, but he'd never really been invested in who she chose to keep in her company anyways.

He glanced at his window, if there was one thing that made this entire venture easier, it was that he lived on the bottom floor of his house, otherwise sneaking out would be a hell of a time. The first time, well it had been a spur of the moment decision really, he just couldn't let such a heinous organization get away with a mere slap on the wrist, so he'd gone looking for answers himself. He'd been out every night since then however, hunting down every little rumour he could to find something, *anything*, to help him figure out where these people were being kept.

Of course, that also meant getting little to no sleep and it was beginning to show, enough that he'd had to steal his mother's concealer to hide the growing darkness around his eyes. And it meant that he was having to turn down all of his friends' invitations to hang out. Although, those were mostly from Momo and Tenya trying to get the group to socialize more.

How either of them could even *think* of keeping to their normal routines was beyond him. Especially since the other two weren't really all that present either, with Denki being, well, a bit of a coward, and the only reason they knew Shoto hadn't gone and disappeared off the face of the earth was Tenya's assurance that he was at home.

His musing was interrupted by a knock on his door, and his mother's voice calling for him, "Neito! Are you up?"

Well if he wasn't already he certainly would have been by the volume of that yelling, "I'm up mum!" He hurried to shove the papers under his pillows before opening the door, and there stood his mother, all dressed up in her hero costume, "are you going on patrol soon?" He asked, already knowing the answer.

Mum nodded, tugging on her gloves, "I left dinner in the fridge, it's in the container with the green lid. I'll probably be home around four, or maybe five depending on how long Tsukauchi insists on keeping me busy."

Neito smiled, "alright mum, I'll be fine," yeah, fine, he was just going to go do some nighttime vigilantism, nothing to see here.

She nodded and hurried out the door. It wasn't really her fault, she'd semi-retired to be able to raise him right after the divorce, but with her being directly involved in this case, it was basically like she was back to being a full-time hero again. And it let him get away with stuff like this, so he wasn't complaining that much. After a few minutes to let her get suitably far away, he shut his door, letting out a sigh of relief.

Time to get to work.

He grabbed the papers from where he'd stashed them, wincing slightly at the sight of them all crumpled, at least the writing was still legible. He'd been promised a meeting with Wraith tonight, a proper one this time, unlike the previous two which was just the pair running into each other and talking for a few minutes.

The vigilante had proven to be mildly useful, supplying Neito with leads to where he *might* find information. Of course, he'd only been able to follow up on one of those leads so far, which proved to be nothing. But there was still hope! He wouldn't let something so small as a failed lead stop him, not when he could be saving people.

He neatly folded the papers, keeping them in his pocket as he turned

off the lights in his room, locked the door, and made his way out of the window. His next lead was probably the first one he should have followed up on given that it was the most promising, however it was further away than both of the other two, and he hadn't wanted to push his luck just yet.

But tonight, he figured he'd have time, the place took nearly an hour to get to on foot, so it would be two hours of travel, but that left him with five hours *minimum* to scour the area, ask around, and go meet with Wraith. He was confident he could make it in time before his mother got home.

The path to the location was surprisingly quiet and Neito managed to wander the streets without much trouble. Normally, a child on their own in the dead of night should be terrified and looking for the nearest safe place, luckily, Neito was no ordinary child, he was the son of a hero and had the skills to prove it.

Okay, *maybe* he would have been shredded the last time he got in a fight if Wraith hadn't been there, but that wasn't the point, he could probably have stolen that shielding quirk and ran. Whatever the case, he would be fine out here, especially since it seemed to be a quiet night. He wondered if the rumours of the CRC's return had scared off the more normal criminals, or if it was just a coincidence.

He quickly found himself at the location Wraith had pointed him towards, though where *exactly* the information was possibly hiding wasn't something they could tell him. And so far, it seemed like the answer to that was nowhere and this was shaping up to be another dead end. Nobody seemed to be around, and neither was there anything that looked out of place to him. Which meant he'd have to start combing through the area until he found what he needed. And with nearly two dozen alleyways, rooftops, and little nooks to go search through, he thought he might have to give up halfway through to get home in time.

Still, he started anyway, because he didn't begin investigating just to give up at the first hurdle.

After a long while of nothing nothing and a whole lot more nothing, Neito was kind of wishing he'd never come out here in the first place.

He huffed to himself, leaning against the alleyway wall and dusting his hands after yet another fruitless search. He closed his eyes for a moment, trying to alleviate his growing irritation and tiredness, when

he heard something fall next to him. He startled, looking up to where the object could have fallen from. His racing heart calmed a bit at the sight of Wraith, who was crouching on the rooftop above tossing a pebble in their hand which they promptly dropped, watching it clatter to the ground before following it themself.

“Wraith, good to see you,” Neito held his head high and tried to act like he hadn’t just had a near heart attack, “do you have anything new to share with me?”

They shrugged, just as enigmatic as the last time, “do you?”

And with that they scurried back up to the rooftop, beckoning him to follow. He tilted his head curiously, but did what they asked, finding himself standing across from them as they stared over the other buildings nearby. He hesitated for a moment, but shuffled closer, turning to them and pulling the papers from his pocket, “this is everything I heard.” It wasn’t much of a secret, at least to him, that heroes liked to gossip an awful lot at parties, and given he went to so many, it was natural that he’d be able to pick up some things.

Wraith looked it all over, it probably wasn’t anything new to them, but he was glad they at least took him seriously.

They finally nodded, handing the papers back as he asked another question, “are you here chasing the lead you told me about?”

“Yes, why?”

Monoma shrugged, “I was wondering if you’d let me tag along, two heads are better than one you know.” He wasn’t confident he would prove much use to an experienced vigilante, but he might as well try.

Wraith didn’t move for a moment, before nodding sharply and darting off. Neito was startled but hurried after them, “hey! What are you doing?”

They slowed down, though didn’t stop, as they turned to sign, “you want to tag along? Then you better be able to keep up.”

A challenge then, to make sure he didn’t slow them down, well Neito hoped that he didn’t disappoint.

He couldn’t focus on much else other than keeping up with the vigilante, it was strange, they didn’t seem to be all that much faster than him. It took him a moment to realise, either they were insanely

fast at processing information, or they didn't even have to check to know what was around them as they effortlessly weaved past tripping hazards and made leaps that he had to slow down to calculate.

Suddenly, Wraith stopped in their tracks, using a hand signal that Neito just barely recognized as what his mother and other undergrounders used for 'target spotted.' He instantly slowed, trying to quiet his footsteps as he halted beside them.

There, on the streets below, was a group of three people talking to each other in hushed voices, Neito had to strain his ears to even hear what was being said.

"I dunno, how long do you think they're gonna make us wait?" One asked.

"Who knows, until the others get freed?" Another responded.

"It's bullshit, we ought to have gotten rid of those beasts weeks ago," the third said.

The first one shook their head, "and risk our numbers basically getting cut in *half*? Nah, we need 'em alive, for now."

Neito glanced at Wraith, who must have felt the same thrill of fear and excitement that he did, they'd found *actual* CRC members meeting up for some reason, this was *gold*.

"Whatever," the third scoffed, "are we still doing our usual rounds?"

"Obviously," the second interjected, "there's no reason not to."

They listened for a while longer, and it seemed there would be no useful information until.

"You're leading the hunt tomorrow, right? You should be careful." The second said, turning to the first.

The first nodded, "it's gonna be a real pain though, east end's got at least three heroes covering it.

Wraith stiffened at that, and Neito's eyes widened, did they mean the east end of Musutafu? It was the most likely given they didn't specify the city, so it should be the one they were in. Well, that just gave them an area for the next set of attacks.

The trio split up not long after, and Wraith immediately pulled him to

the side, “I guess we got our information. Sorry it’s nothing about where they’re keeping the hostages.”

Neito shook his head, “I’ll just have to go check on the other leads,” he glanced back in the direction of the street, “what’re we going to do about the attacks?”

Wraith paused, “*we* don’t need to do anything, *I* can go tip off Eraserhead and Vlad King that something’s going on in their turf, can’t do much about the limelighter in the area, but those two should be enough.”

Neito narrowed his eyes, “as if they’ll listen to a vigilante.”

Wraith shook their head, “they’ll listen, I’ve worked with both of them before.”

Neito frowned, that didn’t mean they’d trust this info without double checking it, and by then it could be too late. He began to pace across the rooftop, trying to figure out what the chances were that the east end would be safe. It wasn’t a big area necessarily, but it wasn’t small either, though a good chunk of the place was taken up by a now defunct industrial complex. “The heroes won’t trust that; we’ll have to do something about it ourselves.”

Wraith’s expression wasn’t visible, but it almost seemed like they were going to continue arguing until they abruptly sat down on the ledge.

Neito looked at them for a moment, before sitting down next to them, his legs crossed to reduce the possibility of falling, “what?”

They stared out at the city, silent, until they reached into their belt and pulled out, was that a sweet roll? He stared at them for a moment as they took it out of the ziplock bag it was in and tore it, holding out one half to him.

He took it carefully, glancing at them, but they’d turned away, pulling their mask down to eat. He took a bite, tasting the sesame filling and fluffy bread, it was nicer than most of the ones his mother bought from the store. And it was at that moment he realised he was actually kind of hungry; he probably should have eaten dinner before going out.

He looked at Wraith again, who’d finished eating rather fast, “what was that for?”

They shrugged, “just wanted to share.”

What an odd vigilante they were, Neito thought, though he’d realised that the last time they met, thanks to Wraith hanging upside down from a fire escape while they conversed, still, this was just *strange*. “So, what’s the plan?” He asked again, hoping this was a sign of trust or something.

“You’re really not giving up on that?”

“I told you the first time, if I don’t do it, who will?”

They tapped their leg against the concrete. “I will,” they finally answered, “you’ve already gotten involved more than you should.”

Neito didn’t fully accept that, but he nodded, “alright, sure, let me know how it goes.”

They nodded and darted off, leaving him behind.

As he began to make his way home, he scoffed quietly, Wraith was only one person, they couldn’t scour the whole area by themself. It seemed he was going to pay the east end a visit tomorrow.

Chapter End Notes

> Oh boy, I wonder what's happening at the east end :3
>
> also sorry this chapter is so late, I have no excuse other than just, my mental health deciding to take a nosedive for no discernible reason and leaving me stuck with writers block for like, five days straight.

Chapter 97: That's a lot of vigilantes.

Chapter Summary

> Hitoshi and Mei meet a new friend, and find a new side of an old one.

Chapter Notes

> Signed Dialogue
> --- : POV switch

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Mei fiddled quietly with the blueprint for her newest baby, she wasn't entirely sure exactly which tools she'd need to put in it, screwdrivers, a knife, wrenches, maybe a pair of pliers somehow. She stared at the list taped to the desk next to her workspace, it seemed she might have to cut down on a few of these, otherwise it would probably become way too bulky to be usable. She sighed, this was probably her least favourite part of being an inventor, while she could tinker all day with scraps, and scavenging for parts was an adventure all on its own, drawing up blueprints was just a whole lot of maths and rulers. She cursed quietly as her pencil slipped, leaving a line through where she'd drawn in the switch component. Sighing in irritation, she erased the mark and resigned herself to having to redo that part of the plan.

Her ma wheeled into the room, focused on the screens she was projecting of whatever repairs she and Mama were working on at the moment. Eventually she looked up and noticed Mei, raising her eyebrow, "what's up little spark?"

Mei draped herself over the back of her chair, "making blueprints," she grumbled, since her dislike of the work was no secret in her family.

Ma came over to her table, dismissing the screens for a moment to look at the paper, "a multitool? Interesting."

Mei hummed, "I want something I can fit in my pocket, so I'm trying to figure out what the bare essentials are."

A screen popped up next to her as her ma pulled up a list of every tool they had in the house. One by one she began ticking things off the checklist, "what about this?" She asked, flipping the screen to show

Mei.

Mei hummed, nodding, “can we double check with mama?” She asked, still unsure of exactly what was the most likely problem she’d run into on the go, and since her mama’s job actually took her out of the house unlike Ma’s, they would know the answer better than most.

Ma nodded, leaning back in her wheelchair to yell into the other room, “Tomoko! C’mere for a sec! Mei wants your help!”

There was a bit of cursing as Mama stumbled out of the workshop, their eyes immediately locking onto Ma, “Aya! I’m working! You nearly made me drop the damn drill!” They held up a still running drill that they were presumably using for a repair.

Ma had the decency to look apologetic for that, “oops.”

“Whatever,” Mama turned off the drill before walking over to Mei’s table, “so, you need help?”

Ma flicked the screen up, “this look like a good list of necessities?”

Mei held up the half-finished blueprint as well, “what do you think?”

Mama scanned the design, holding their hand out for the pencil, Mei handed it to them and watched as they silently sketched at the concepts in the corner of the page before setting it back down, “have you tried some different casings? This doesn’t look like it could fit everything you want.”

Mei sighed, “yeah, well, I’m just, *stuck*”

That was when Ma turned off her quirk, “right, it’s getting late, how about you go to bed and try to figure this out in the morning?”

Mei didn’t want to leave her precious baby on the backburner for now, but, she supposed her ma had a point. “Alright, good night ma, mama,” she hugged her mothers, getting a kiss on the forehead from each. Before hurrying off to bed.

As soon as she closed and locked the door she grabbed her phone, opening the private texts between her and Hitoshi.

Mei: *i’m ready when you are! (งᵔ□ᵔ)ง*

Hitoshi: *Gr8, dad went to bed a bit ago, yk the drill.*

Mei waited for the sound of her mothers' bedroom door shutting before she crept out of her window, balancing cautiously on the ledge as she shimmied her way down. After a few agonizing minutes of making sure she didn't fall, she found herself on the fire escape, at which point she took the stairs down to the street below.

Hitoshi was already there, though it looked like he'd only beaten her by a little bit considering he was still fixing his clothes, he looked up, grinning, "so, ready for another night out partner?"

Mei giggled, "so ready, let's get going already!" She hurried off with him quickly following.

So far, this whole vigilante thing had been going quite well actually, they'd been going out every other night for the last week, and they'd yet to run into anything they couldn't handle. Though, if she was being honest, Hitoshi was really the core of this operation. He was the one who knew how to fight, how to sneak, and she was mostly there in case things ever got messy. Which, since everything was still smooth sailing, meant that she just had to sit back and watch Hitoshi punch people. Not a lot of people, not yet at least. Not for lack of searching mind, it was just that they were having trouble finding, well, *trouble*.

She glanced at Hitoshi, who was currently scanning the streets, his eyes sharper than normal and lacking the usual tiredness. There was something different about him whenever they went out, she couldn't put a finger on it, but it was there.

Tonight, it didn't take long for them to find exactly what they were looking for. Hitoshi ran towards the noise of someone yelling obscenities, and Mei followed.

The noise abruptly stopped as they reached it, and they saw a squirrel heteromorph being thrown against the wall of a building by someone in a skull mask. The heteromorph slumped to the ground, hopefully just unconscious. Hitoshi wasted no time in kicking out the attacker's knees before they could even turn around, he looked them over for a moment before he punched them in the jaw. Mei could tell he wanted to yell at this asshole, but that was the first thing they'd agreed on, no talking while they were fighting, one less thing for them to be identified by.

Hitoshi walked up to the heteromorph who'd been attacked, nudging them until they stirred, at which point he ran back to Mei, and the

pair scampered away before they could be seen.

After that, it was all quiet again, this was the typical pattern, they'd find something, then search for a long time, and find another thing. Some might consider it boring, but there was an electrifying quality to doing this, at least it was better than being helpless.

There was another bit of noise and the pair hurried over. The sound had stopped even before they reached it and they desperately hoped that they weren't too late. Hitoshi suddenly stopped dead in his tracks, and Mei caught up quickly, wondering what had happened.

Well, there was a member of the CRC alright, and judging by the energy being emitted from their hands, it was the same one they'd faced that made them decide to become vigilantes. Mei's eyes darted to the figure fighting them, a young boy, maybe around their age. He was dodging between the blasts until he suddenly grabbed the person's hand for a brief moment, darting back, the boy suddenly shot out the same energy as them. What the hell?

The CRC member dropped to the ground, and that was when the boy noticed he had an audience. "Oh!" He exclaimed, taking a step back, "um, hello?" He was glancing between them and the body on the ground, "they attacked me first I swear."

The two friends exchanged a glance, then, Hitoshi stepped forward, "I'm sorry, I don't think I've seen you around before." Mei stood to his side, doing her best to look intimidating.

The boy huffed, "I'm sure, look, just run along and forget about this, alright?" Mei wasn't really liking that snooty tone of his, so no, she wasn't going to let it go, and it seemed that neither was Hitoshi.

"What are you doing here?" Mei asked, cutting off whatever her friend was about to say.

"Can't a guy take a walk in peace?" The boy exclaimed.

There was a groaning noise as the unconscious person began to wake, to which all three children decided to book it before they got caught. Unfortunately, the boy was still with them when the pair finally stopped a little ways away.

Mei knew Hitoshi was already starting to get annoyed, they couldn't possibly go do vigilantism with this boy around, on the other hand, a thought occurred to her. "Hey, you wouldn't happen to have been

looking for that fight, would you?" She asked. He'd seemed awfully skilled for being a kid like them, what were the chances he was doing the same thing they were?

The boy tilted his head in what seemed like genuine confusion, "oh no, I was just ambushed by the bastard while on a walk."

Mei wasn't buying it, despite Hitoshi pulling her away, she pressed on, "uh huh, so you aren't here to help stop the attacks? What a shame."

The boy narrowed his eyes, "what exactly do you mean by that?" He glanced at them for a moment, "you two wouldn't happen to be out here for that, would you?"

Their startled expressions clearly gave them away, though the boy seemed to relax at that, "alright, fine, I heard a rumour yesterday that the CRC would be doing a hunt in this area tonight, I figured I'd help out since I doubt the heroes are going to."

Hitoshi's eyes lit up, "oh, in that case, yeah, we noticed the attacks and decided to do something about it ourselves."

The boy nodded, holding out his hand, "how about a deal?" He asked, "I don't know much about this area, and surely you could use another person on your team, we can go together."

Hitoshi stared at him for a moment before hesitantly shaking his hand, "fine, you can tag along, you seemed to be able to handle yourself pretty well back there."

"Wonderful!" The boy shook Hitoshi's hand enthusiastically, "my name is Monoma Neito, may I know who I'm working with?"

Well, it couldn't hurt, it wasn't like either party could report the other for vigilantism without being caught themselves, "I'm Hatsume Mei," Mei shook his hand as well, "and that's Shinso Hitoshi, nice to meet you!"

Their new ally followed them around for a while, occasionally asking about what they knew about the CRC, which was when a loud clanging caught their attention. It seemed it would be a busy night which, if Monoma's words about a 'hunt' were true, made some sense.

The three of them ran to the sound, and once again, without hesitation, Hitoshi charged right into the fight, with Monoma following shortly behind. Though Mei couldn't help the bit of fear that

spiked through her when she realised there were four opponents this time, not one, at least the heteromorph they'd been attacking was fully unconscious.

The boys would have to take a pair each, and those weren't odds she'd bet on.

Two of the assailants went down quickly thanks to the element of surprise, but then one of them grabbed Hitoshi by the arm. Mei prepared to charge in there to help, when her eyes caught movement on the rooftop above.

Hitoshi struggled against his opponent's iron grip, and then suddenly he heard a pained sound and he was free. He saw Monoma's eyes widen, "Wraith!" The other boy exclaimed, seemingly relieved.

Hitoshi whipped around to see a figure standing above the body of the person who'd been attacking him moments prior, their face was hidden well, who was this?

The last person lunged at the newcomer, and Monoma pulled Hitoshi away, running back to where Mei was standing looking stunned, "who is that?" She asked as the three hid behind the building.

Monoma panted as he caught his breath, "Wraith, they're a vigilante, a proper one," he explained, "and they're the person who helped me find that information." There was something wrong though, the boy looked worried.

"And?" Mei asked, trying to prompt an explanation.

Monoma shook his head, "I'm not exactly supposed to be here," he said.

Hitoshi peeked his head around the corner and watched the vigilante as they darted under a blow and turned around in time to deliver a roundhouse kick to the back, knocking the other person to the ground.

What?

Hitoshi blinked in stunned silence as a shock of realisation ran through him, he knew that move. He knew it because he'd been pinned by that same damn kick nearly a hundred times.

Wraith knocked out the CRC member with their staff, at which point Hitoshi blurted out, "Izuku!?"

The vigilante froze, which was all the confirmation he needed, “holy shit, what are you doing here!?” He asked, unable to hold back his questions.

Mei gasped, “no way, really!?”

The vigilante, who was definitely Izuku, sighed as they signed in familiar motions, “hello Hitoshi, Mei.”

Monoma glanced between the three of them for a moment, before something seemed to click, “Izuku?” He parroted, and just when Hitoshi was bracing himself to explain that, yeah, apparently they knew this particular vigilante, Monoma said, “like, Tenya’s cousin Izuku?”

Izuku let out an even louder sigh at that, “yes, fine, hi,” and then they added a sign which Hitoshi assumed to be Monoma’s name. “Oh, and didn’t I tell you to stay out of this?”

Monoma spluttered, “w-well you can’t possibly have expected me to do nothing! Besides, you’re no better yourself!”

Mei cleared her throat, “can someone explain what the fuck is going on!?”

After a moment, Izuku pulled down the hood concealing the top half of their face, their fluffy green hair looking even messier than usual, “follow me.” And with that they scampered up to the rooftops where they so often perched.

The three other children shared a very confused look before Monoma suddenly sped off after them, leaving Hitoshi and Mei to very carefully pick their way up to the ledge where they pulled themselves up. Izuku was already pacing around, while Monoma watched with an inscrutable expression.

Izuku turned to their best friends, “alright, what the hell are you two doing out at this time of night?”

“Well,” Hitoshi began, “we may or may not have decided to do some vigilantism of our own to stop the attacks...”

Izuku stared at him like he’d lost his mind, which, considering what they were doing didn’t seem very fair, “what is wrong with all of you!?" They asked incredulously.

Mei huffed, “well you’re doing the same thing!”

They threw up their hands, “I’ve been doing this for *years*, you three have zero experience!”

Monoma shook his head, “nope, no, I don’t care, who else is going to do this?”

“I told you I’d handle it!” Izuku looked *pissed*, “do any of you realise how dangerous this is?”

“You’re being pretty hypocritical there Izu,” Hitoshi muttered.

They flipped him off, “like I said earlier, I’ve been doing this for years, but besides that, I nearly got killed so many times during the early days, I’m not letting you go through that.”

Monoma scowled, “fine then, supervise us if you have to, but you certainly won’t convince *me* not to help.”

“Ditto to that,” Mei crossed her arms stubbornly.

“Yeah, you’re not getting rid of us that easy,” Hitoshi agreed.

Izuku looked between the three of them, before pinching the bridge of their nose, “fine, if you insist on being stupid, then I suppose I don’t have a choice. Here’s the rule, I say you stay out of a certain fight, then you *stay out*.” They pulled their staff from its place on their back, huh, so that’s why they had it, and ran off.

Monoma grumbled something like, “again!?” And took off after them, with the other two further behind as they tried to keep up without falling.

They only found one more fight that night, which Izuku allowed them to get involved with, though it didn’t matter much since they basically decimated both of the assailants before either Monoma or Hitoshi could even get down from the roof.

Finally, Izuku turned to their companions, “alright, my patrol ends here, and it’s getting late anyways, so all of you shoo off back home.”

Monoma frowned, “I suppose I’ll find you again if you have anything new to share.”

Mei tilted her head, “anything new? About what?”

Izuku looked like they were about to physically shut Monoma up, but unfortunately he was quicker, “about the CRC for my investigation!”

Hitoshi tilted his head, “so you're conducting an investigation.”

Monoma sighed, “yes, well, I’m trying to find a-” Izuku put a hand over his mouth and glared at him for a moment before backing off, “er, *someone* who was kidnapped by the organization.” He waved a hand at Izuku, “they were helping me investigate the rumours since they’re looking to help shut down this operation as well.”

Hitoshi raised an eyebrow, “huh,” he glanced at Izuku who was utterly horrified when they realised what was about to happen, he turned to Monoma, “so, any room for another person in this plan of yours?”

“Another two people!” Mei chirped happily.

“No, absolutely not!” Izuku signed furiously.

“Sure!” Monoma ignored them completely.

Izuku looked like they wanted to bash their head into the wall, “why!?”

“Because we want to help people, that’s why,” Hitoshi said simply.

Well, that seemed to be their ticket, since Izuku’s expression stuttered for a moment before turning to resignation, “you know, I don’t like being on this end of the argument.”

Mei seemed to be about to ask what the hell that meant, when they continued, “alright, but we’re not doing anything stupidly dangerous, alright? I don’t want to have to explain to your parents that I let you get hurt.”

“Deal!” Monoma grinned, and Hitoshi and Mei nodded as well.

“Oh, Monoma?” Mei held out her phone, “what’s your number? I can add you to the group chat to make planning easier!”

Hitoshi was a little miffed that she hadn’t run that by him first, though it *was* the most logical option. Monoma nodded, adding his contact into her phone and giving it back, “well then, I should probably get back before my mum comes home, I’ll see you all soon!” He waved goodbye and hurried off.

Izuku glanced at their friends, “please just go straight home.” And they disappeared too.

Hitoshi and Mei decided to take that advice and hurried back to their apartment building. She pulled him into a hug and muttered a good night before they split up to go to their respective bedrooms.

He didn’t know what any of this meant for him, but, if there was one thing he knew, it was that he’d finally tasted what it was like to be able stand up to bullies and bigots, and he knew he’d never give it up for anything.

Chapter End Notes

> The gang's all here folks! And Izuku's suddenly the responsible one in the room.

Chapter 98: Who ever said being a vigilante was easy?

Chapter Summary

Neito, Hitoshi, and Mei get put through the wringer in the name of making sure they don't get themselves killed.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Neito stared at the location that had been sent in the group chat, squinting his eyes as if that would somehow cause it to suddenly make some semblance of sense. He glanced around, were they playing a prank on him or something? He stood in the middle of an empty street in Musutafu's former industrial complex, directly in front of what looked to be an abandoned factory.

When Izuku had texted the chat to call an in-person meeting at 'the usual place,' Neito had to pull some strings to get out of the house. He made a mental note to apologize to Denki for making him cover by asking him to say Neito was at his place. Neito hadn't technically *lied* to the other boy when he said he needed to meet some civilian friends; he just forgot to include the part where said civilians were also vigilantes on the side.

After a few moments of looking around and double checking in the group chat that, yes, this was in fact the correct location, he heard footsteps approaching. He looked up from his phone to see Shinso waving awkwardly at him.

Neito smiled, "ah, there you are," he looked around, "where on earth did you come from."

Shinso laughed, "right, sorry about that, we kinda forgot the spot isn't really something easy to find." He beckoned Neito to follow, slipping past a back alley and towards what, for all intents and purposes, looked like a random storage unit just like the ones next to it. But instead of leading Neito anywhere further, Shinso opened the door to the unit, making an 'after you' gesture.

To say Neito was confused was an understatement, but he stepped inside and found that, no, it wasn't just a random storage unit after all. The main area was cleared out, with some mats scattered haphazardly with apparently no rhyme or reason. At least, that's what Neito thought until he witnessed Izuku drop from a pile of boxes onto one of said mats, and suddenly their placements were making a whole lot more sense. Hatsume was in the corner at a makeshift table that was really just one of the long boxes turned upside down with a smaller box as a chair, she seemed to be sketching something and waved hello without looking up.

Izuku darted up to the pair, "hello Monoma!" They exclaimed, "come on!"

As Izuku led Neito to the middle of the room, Shinso called over to Hatsume, "c'mon Mei, meeting's beginning." She hummed, pulling her goggles up and hurrying over as well.

Izuku stood there, inspecting the three for a moment, though, what they were looking for, Neito couldn't tell, they silently nodded to themself, pulling out one of those oh so familiar notebooks from their backpack and setting it aside. "Okay, here's the thing, I don't think any of you are fully capable of being vigilantes." As all three started to protest, they held up their hand to silence them, "I'm being honest, none of you have the skills required to stay safe out there on your own."

Shinso crossed his arms, "you trained me to fight."

"Correction, I trained you for self-defence," they looked at him pointedly, "and being good at fighting doesn't cover even half of the things you need to know."

"But you already agreed to let us be vigilantes with you," Neito pointed out, to which Izuku nodded.

"Yes, but you're still incompetent," they argued, "last night you got in way over your heads, if I wasn't there you'd both have been seriously injured, or worse." They looked around the group to see if their words registered, and, at least to Neito, they certainly did, he was no stranger to how dangerous heroics was, and vigilantism was just heroics minus the support structures.

Satisfied that they seemed to have gotten through, Izuku continued, "so, today, I'm going to try and get you all up to my standards. Though we *are* on a time crunch here, so you probably won't be as

trained as I'd like, but it'll be better than what you have right now."

Neito noticed that Shinso looked slightly terrified at the concept, while Hatsume seemed, *hesitant*, he wondered why that was but chalked it down to the pair being generally inexperienced. He focused back on Izuku as they began organizing the three of them, "Hitoshi, you've got the fighting mostly down, but your other skills are near abysmal, Monoma, you're decently well rounded on everything except direct combat and adaptability, and Mei..." They grimaced slightly, "at least you've got enough muscle that you don't have to build up any more?" They tried, their hands moving slower as they did their best not to sound awkward.

Hatsume giggled, "it's fine Izu, I know I need the most work here."

Izuku sighed, "right, well, Hitoshi, can you show Mei some of the basic stuff I taught you? Monoma, come with me." Shinso nodded, turning to Hatsume, though not before surreptitiously mouthing 'good luck' at Neito.

Izuku led Neito to the other side of the room, far enough away to let the two pairs train without interfering with each other, "how much training *have* you had anyway?" They asked, which was weird considering they knew most of it, since they'd directly helped him with his quirk training, not that anyone outside his friend group knew that.

Neito supposed he should just answer the question anyway, ticking things off his fingers as he went, "oh, well I've done martial arts, parkour, a bit of-"

He yelped in a distinctly undignified manner as he was suddenly thrown to the ground, scrambling up, he stared in utter confusion at a now laughing Izuku, "what was that!?"

"Never let your guard down," was their only answer before they were darting at him again.

Neito wasn't proud to say that the next fifteen minutes consisted of him, quite frankly, getting his ass kicked. Every time he thought they were going to give him some semblance of a break, it turned out to be some kind of ruse. Though it wasn't all that bad once he recognized that they were simply making sure he understood their earlier statement, and once he learned to expect their attacks at any moment, dodging actually became easier, and he could even attempt to return their punches once or twice.

Finally, they backed off, signing that this part of their training was done. Neito didn't quite trust that, so he stayed in a defensive position for nearly a full minute before Izuku looked at him with approval, "I'm serious, we're done, though it's good to know you're a fast learner."

Neito held his head high at the praise as Izuku scurried over to where Hatsume and Shinso were throwing punches at each other, he couldn't see what they signed, but Shinso nodded and walked over to where Neito was standing.

"They're a brutal trainer, but it gets results," Shinso muttered, looking sympathetically at Neito, who just shrugged.

"Are they?" He was genuinely confused, "a bit unorthodox definitely but *brutal?* I felt like it was fairly easy to keep up once I understood they weren't going to go easy."

Shinso looked at him incredulously, "you found it easy," he parroted, and Neito took a moment to register that Shinso was indirectly asking how he found it easy.

"Why do you do that?" He asked, having noticed the odd speech pattern even over their brief text conversation that morning as well.

Shinso looked a bit hesitant before simply saying, "it's a quirk thing," and leaving it at that, "seriously though I cannot believe you think it's easy to keep up with them."

Neito didn't quite know what to say to that, "well, I've had training before, so it's probably that I'm closer to their level than you were when you first started," he reasoned, given that Shinso likely had zero experience prior to meeting Izuku.

Shinso just grumbled, "that seems unlikely."

"It really isn't," Neito said, if his mother wasn't an underground hero he'd have bragged about it already.

There was a loud whistle from the other end and both of them turned to see Izuku glaring at them while chasing Hatsume around, Shinso sighed, yelling back, "alright alright, we'll get to it!"

Neito looked at him curiously, but he just dropped into a fighting stance, "they wanted us to spar."

“Ah, alright then,” Neito took the first move, trying to trip Shinso up, but it seemed the other boy wasn’t going to be that easy.

The two of them were far more evenly matched than Neito had expected, forcing him to try harder than he thought he’d need to in order to try and win. It was also clear to him from moment one that their strengths lay in entirely different areas. He could dodge whatever Shinso threw at him with ease, meaning he usually won by outlasting the other boy, but Shinso obviously had him beat in strength, and all it took was one misstep for him to be sent tumbling to the ground.

Actually, he found himself enjoying the fight quite a lot, Shinso was relentless, and clearly didn’t know when to back off, but it just made the other boy an unpredictable adversary. And Neito couldn’t help but be silently thrilled at the challenge of the veritable game of chicken they were inevitably stuck in. He made Shinso falter exactly once during that hour, by baiting him into a corner and darting around to box him in, causing him to stumble in order to turn around in time to block a kick to the side, the irritated look on his face was absolutely worth the punch to the face that followed.

At some point later, Izuku whistled to grab everyone’s attention, “break time!” They signed before digging through their backpack.

Neito slumped onto one of the boxes, and Hatsume sat next to him, drinking from her water bottle. She suddenly paused, staring at him weird, “uh, Monoma, did you not bring any water?”

“Uh, I didn’t know I was supposed to,” he muttered, slightly embarrassed, “it’s not like I expected to be sparring all day.”

She giggled, holding her bottle out to him, “here, we don’t want you collapsing or something.” He stared at her for a moment before hesitantly taking it, only just realising how thirsty he actually was as he drank nearly a quarter of it.

“Thank you,” he said, handing it back to her, she just gave him a thumbs up and screwed the lid back on before both children’s attention was directed towards Izuku as the click of something being opened rang through the space.

It seemed that they were holding a plastic container of some kind, and both Hatsume and Shinso’s eyes lit up at the sight, “Izuku!” Hatsume exclaimed, “you brought snacks?”

Izuku nodded, handing the container to Shinso before signing, “had some extra laying around, figured I’d share.”

Neito leaned over, trying to see what was inside, when Shinso picked out something and handed the container over to him, “don’t let Mei keep it, she’ll steal all the best ones.”

Hatsume stuck her tongue out at Shinso, “don’t give away my secrets!”

Izuku sighed, settling next to Neito and scribbling in their notebook as they watched their friends continue to bicker with amusement.

Neito looked at the container in his hands, it was full of shortbread biscuits, “oh, where’d you get these?” He asked, picking out one and munching on it.

“Papa’s been stress baking,” they answered, huh, Neito didn’t know Present Mic could bake. Though, speaking of Izuku’s family.

“So, question, does your family-“ he began to ask, but very quickly got shushed by Izuku as they looked at their friends, who were still bickering, they let out a sigh of relief.

“We don’t need others hearing this,” they signed, keeping a close eye on the other two.

Neito took the hint and stood up as he muttered quietly about stretching his legs and wandered off to the corner, Izuku snuck after him, and the pair hid themselves behind one of the boxes. He glanced around the corner for a moment, “do they not know who you are?” He asked quietly, and Izuku shook their head, “why? I mean, I get it with your dad, he’s an undergrounder, but Mic’s well known, I’m sure they’d be thrilled to know that one of your fathers is a hero!”

Izuku looked weary, “well, here’s the thing, papa is Hitoshi’s second favourite hero, and dad is his first, and I really don’t want him to start treating me different ‘cause of that, and Mei can’t keep a secret from him, so I don’t wanna tell either of them.”

Neito winced sympathetically, reminding himself that, while Izuku wasn’t a legacy in the social sense, that normalcy relied heavily on secrecy about their family. “Oh, right.” He sometimes forgot that, while he kind of relished in the attention, others weren’t so keen to be seen as special.

“Yeah, so, I’d appreciate it if you *didn’t* mention my family much.”

He nodded, when another thought came to him, “wait, Shinso has seen your dad?” Because there was no other way for a civilian to know about an underground hero, let alone hold one in such high regard.

“Apparently dad saved his life once,” they explained.

“Oh, that makes sense.”

Izuku looked back at their friends, “anyways, you were asking me earlier?”

“Yeah, about the whole Wraith thing, do they know?” He couldn’t imagine they didn’t, considering it was unlikely a hero parent *wouldn’t* notice that their child being a vigilante, his own mother aside.

They nodded, “they know, obviously, since dad was actually the one sent to arrest me,” they giggled, “though as you can see, it didn’t exactly work out as intended.”

Neito chuckled at that, his mind trying to recall if he knew who’d gotten involved in the Wraith case all those years ago, unfortunately his mind was drawing a blank. He looked around, noticing that the other two had stopped talking, and he signalled for Izuku to follow him, the two of them could talk about their families later.

Izuku skipped over to the centre, pulling all three of them back into training, and this time, they were trying to teach their friends how to do some basic parkour. Neito, being already proficient in that area, was instructed to supervise Hatsume’s attempts and make sure she didn’t get hurt.

To be completely honest, Neito was rather impressed that both Shinso and Hatsume were managing even half as well as they did. While neither were quite able to calculate gaps or know how much power they’d need for a jump, it was still an improvement to being unable to keep up with him and Izuku yesterday, to the point where Neito had noticed Izuku running significantly slower than when they’d done the same disappearing trick to him, probably to give their friends a chance.

After Izuku called an end to the training, both Shinso and Hatsume looked like they wanted to flop onto the ground, Neito resisted the urge to tease them about it. Izuku and Shinso were arguing back and forth for a bit about the fact that Izuku may or may not be trying to murder their friends, and Hatsume nearly sent Neito tumbling to the

ground when she stumbled into him. “Oops,” she grinned helping steady him, “sorry ’bout that.”

“It’s fine, no harm done,” Neito waved off her apology, checking the time on his phone, he cursed quietly, “shit, I have to go, my mother will be expecting me home soon.” He hadn’t quite counted on this meeting taking so long and had promised to be back home before evening.

Izuku looked alarmed at that, “alright, I can wrap things up with these two, go, before you get in trouble!” And they began pushing him out of the door.

Neito nodded, “I will, goodbye! I’ll see you soon!” He called back before dashing out the door and heading to the bus stop.

When he got home and managed to dodge his mother’s questions long enough to get to his room, he opened his phone again, looking through the group chat. It seemed like Hatsume was brainstorming some new invention of hers, which she kept calling her ‘baby’ for some odd reason, and Shinso was desperately trying to convince her that whatever she was planning was *not* a good idea. He joined Izuku in fuelling the fire as they both encouraged Hatsume to do what she wanted, much to Shinso’s chagrin.

Finally, he flopped back onto his bed, fishing his notes from out of his drawer. He couldn’t help but feel as if he’d gotten himself into something much bigger than a simple investigation, and it was far too late to turn back.

Chapter End Notes

> I think the word you're looking for is 'friendship' Neito, and it is indeed much too late to turn back.
>
> Also I know I'm late. Shush.

Chapter 99: Nap time.

Chapter Summary

Neito's stupid decisions catch up to him.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

Uh, also this is just kinda some cute shit, because I wanted to write cute shit.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Neito shuffled through the papers in his drawer, half tempted to crumple them up and throw them out the window, three days of patrols and still he'd gotten nothing useful. He took a deep breath, forcing himself to put everything back carefully before slamming the drawer shut with a vengeance and screaming into his hands. Once he'd gotten all that emotion out, he glanced at himself in the mirror to make sure he was decently presentable, grumbling as he realised he had to reapply the concealer that had smudged away. He was lucky his mother wasn't awake yet; she had a longer patrol last night, which meant that despite it being well into the day, she was still completely knocked out.

He glanced at his phone, checking the time and freaking out slightly as he realised he was about to be late to the meeting. He opened the group chat and gave everyone a heads up that they could start without him before running to the kitchen, grabbing something to eat and his water bottle, and running out the door.

He sighed as he finally got on the bus, leaning back in his seat and trying to organize his thoughts. The last few days had been utter madness, between the patrols and Izuku's training, he'd barely gotten a break, and he was certain Shinso and Hatsume were feeling similarly exhausted. He wouldn't complain though, he'd already helped stop multiple people from getting hurt, and that at least made up for the lack of useful information. Besides, he was certain he'd go crazy if he actually decided to stop and rest, there was too much work to be done.

The factory was as imposing as usual, Neito accompanied Hatsume into it exactly once, but he thought the whole space was a bit

depressing and decided to never set foot in there again. That didn't matter of course, since he was slipping behind the building into the much cozier storage unit.

He opened the door, quietly stepping inside so as to not disturb whatever preparations were going on. He could see the other three huddled in the corner, conversing about something that he couldn't quite make out. Of course, his presence did not go unnoticed, as the second he walked forward Hatsume's head tilted towards him, followed closely by Shinso glancing up and giving him a nod. Izuku didn't seem to acknowledge his presence but knowing them they'd probably sensed he was there the moment the door moved.

He waved quietly, shuffling over to the group and taking a seat on one of the boxes. He glanced over at the trio and wondered, not for the first time, just how close they were, seemingly the answer was *very*, considering that they were currently draped over each other in what appeared to be an attempt at cuddling while allowing Izuku the freedom to sign.

"Afternoon everyone, what did I miss?" He asked.

"Nothing much," Hatsume said, "we were just going over some things we already knew."

Shinso nodded in agreement, "yeah, looks like there isn't much we can do today other than training."

Izuku raised their hands, "I'd offer to take you guys on patrol, but we did that yesterday and I don't want to overwork you."

Neito hummed, "alright, let's get started then," he said, standing up and stretching to chase away the last remnants of exhaustion from his body before getting into place on the central mat.

Today they were doing sparring, which meant that they'd be fighting in pairs with Izuku occasionally stopping them to swap partners, something about not getting too comfortable with one routine. By the end of it Neito was so focused on dodging Shinso's punches that he had missed the fact that they'd strayed out of their zone and were dangerously close to where the other two were sparring. A fact that caused him to bump right into Hatsume and send the both of them tumbling to the ground.

He scrambled up, "oh, sorry, I should've been paying attention."

Hatsume waved off his apology, “it’s fine, no harm done.”

Izuku, however, looked slightly disappointed as they helped Hatsume off the ground. Neito winced, knowing they’d have gone on about situational awareness if their hands weren’t occupied.

Eventually, training was called to a halt, and the other three returned to whatever they were doing. Neito was about to just sit back and watch the chaos when he heard Hatsume curse.

“Shit, I forgot my baby!” She exclaimed, and Neito politely stifled the laugh that threatened to bubble up from his chest.

Izuku hurried over to her, “is it back at your apartment?” They asked.

Hatsume nodded, “I’m just gonna go and grab it real quick.”

“Maybe you shouldn’t go alone,” Shinso pointed out, and she seemed to agree.

“Yeah, good idea, yo Monoma!” She called and Neito startled at the fact that she was asking him of all people, “wanna help me grab my stuff?”

He shrugged, “sure, why not.”

He followed her out of the storage unit, listening to her constant rambling with several snarky remarks of his own thrown in there. Though the walk didn’t take all that long, it still felt like they’d somehow managed to go through hours’ worth of conversation in the short time. It felt a little like talking with Denki, one minute they were discussing the ways technology mimicked the biological world, and the next they were going on about how the platypus was really a very strange creature.

Once they stopped outside the building, Hatsume led him inside and they took the elevator up. Neito looked around a bit, it wasn’t the fanciest apartment building he’d ever seen, but then again given the social circles he hung around that wasn’t surprising. He waited patiently outside the door as Hatsume grabbed whatever she wanted, she returned with a duffle bag full of stuff, and when Neito looked around expecting to find something for him to carry, he didn’t notice anything.

“Did you really need me here?” He asked curiously.

Hatsume shrugged, “yes, no, kinda? I usually go with someone otherwise I’m gonna lose track of time and forget that I’m supposed to be somewhere else,” she explained.

“Ah, I see,” now Neito was even more confused as to why she opted to go with him instead of someone who’d have known to keep her focused.

“Mhm!” Hatsume chirped as she adjusted the bag on her shoulder, “so let’s get back before we miss all the fun!”

The walk back seemed like it would be just about as uneventful as the first time, and Neito was fighting back a yawn by the time they were about halfway.

Hatsume was muttering something about gears when all of a sudden she paused before nudging Neito forward urgently. He shook his head, his thoughts clearing long enough to wonder what was going on when he heard it, the sounds of a scuffle just around the corner.

The two of them shared a look before chasing the sound. It didn’t seem to be anything like what they’d been fighting so far, in fact, it seemed to just be a half-drunken argument that had gotten out of hand. Neito breathed a sigh of relief as he kept walking and ignored something that would definitely get them both in trouble if they interfered with it. Hatsume had turned to follow when suddenly a jolt of electricity caught her on the arm, causing her to stumble and drop her bag. As she hurried to pick it back up the two other people turned and noticed they had an audience.

One of the people started yelling, though what they were saying was impossible to understand with how much their speech was slurred. Hatsume’s bag suddenly flew up and hit her down, landing on top of her and pinning her to the ground. Neito rushed over to her, trying to free her, but unfortunately it seemed to be a pretty strong telekinesis quirk keeping it in place.

After struggling a bit, he stood up and faced the pair of drunks. Izuku was going to be so annoyed at him for this, but he didn’t really have much of a choice. He glanced at them both, eyes lighting up when he noticed which one had sparks at their fingertips, luckily, it was the closer one as well. He took advantage of the fact that he could probably outmanoeuvre whatever was thrown at him and ran directly at the person with the electric quirk.

He was right, and the person was caught off guard enough that he

managed to graze their hand. He felt a familiar rush of power through his veins as he retreated out of range. The quirk didn't seem too dissimilar to Denki's so it should be easy enough to control. Neito felt a crackling at his fingertips as he let out a shock towards the pair of people who quickly went down thanks to a combination of their drunkenness and the pain of the quirk hitting them.

He heard Hatsume scrambling up behind him as her bag was no longer pinning her down. Though as he turned to ask if she was alright, he felt a wave of dizziness wash over him and he fell forward, blacking out just as a pair of hands caught him.

The first thing Neito noticed as he came to was the sound of hushed voices somewhere above him, the next thing he noticed was that he was warm. He let out a sleepy noise of confusion as he instinctively covered his ears. The noise abruptly stopped as a relieved voice exclaimed, "Monoma! You're up!" Oh, that was Hatsume.

Neito grumbled quietly as he opened his eyes and noticed that he was apparently back in the warehouse, covered with a blanket with Shinso and Hatsume hovering over him. He glanced around for Izuku and spotted them pacing around nearby. They immediately turned to him, frantically signing, "what happened?"

He blinked, "um, what?" Maybe his mind wasn't all that present, but he genuinely couldn't figure out what they were asking. He tried to sit up only to be held down by an arm, and that was about when he noticed that his head was actually on Shinso's lap.

Izuku sighed, sitting cross-legged in front of him, "you passed out, what happened?"

"Oh, um, I guess that electricity quirk took more out of me than I realised," Neito muttered.

Izuku didn't look happy with that answer, "you should have been more careful."

Neito turned away, sleepily rubbing at his eyes, at which point Shinso stiffened, "uh, dude, I don't think it was just the quirk's fault."

"Huh?" Neito was still very confused.

Hatsume grimaced, "yeesh, those eye bags are worse than Toshi's!" Neito mentally kicked himself as he realised he must have rubbed away the concealer under his eyes.

Izuku pinched the bridge of their nose before signing, “Monoma, when exactly was the last time you slept properly?”

Neito winced, “before I started investigating the CRC?”

That seemed to be the wrong answer as suddenly, he found himself trapped under a very heavy person, “hey! Hatsume!”

Hatsume grinned cheekily, “I’m not moving, you take a nap, moron.”

Izuku agreed, “sleep is important, you can’t help people if you’re too tired to do anything.”

Neito was about to argue that no, he could wait, and that there were far more important things to be doing. However his eyes were already drooping shut as he felt Izuku’s smaller body curl up against his, and a soft humming filled the room.

He sighed, giving into the urge to rest, just for now, besides, something about being surrounded by people was making it a whole lot easier to sleep than usual, so he might as well take advantage of it.

Chapter End Notes

> Ironically enough it's the middle of the night while I'm posting this lol.
>
> Also I freaking love cuddle piles, they're the best.
>
> I should be able to post the next chapter on Saturday, so, hopefully I can get back on schedule from there.

Chapter 100: Ghosts

Chapter Summary

Izuku and their friends finally make a real plan.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sometimes, Izuku wondered if this was how their family felt about them when they first showed up. They stood off to the side of the storage unit, watching their three friends chase each other around the space with a sense of pride mixed with a pang of guilt.

They'd never meant for Hitoshi and Mei to get involved with their work, and they'd certainly never imagined Monoma would be the type to break rules like this. They wished so badly that they could pull their friends away from the dangers of vigilantism, they knew they didn't need the help, they had enough support behind them already, and this was just putting people they cared for in danger. They didn't even know what they'd tell their parents. Dad would probably be disappointed in them; Papa might just faint on the spot. And they didn't even want to *consider* the rest of their family.

They took a deep breath, maybe it would be like what Uncle Kazumi always said, 'everybody wants to be a hero until the rose-tinted glasses shatter,' their friends might not even be *willing* to continue after this mission was over. They knew they were lying to themself, and they only had to take one look at the group to understand that. Monoma was practically guaranteed to become a hero, so what was a bit of vigilantism before then? Hitoshi would probably rather die than give up the ability to make a difference. And Mei was too loyal to just let her friends put themselves in danger alone.

They sighed, mostly to themself, as they whistled and reminded Mei to pace herself and not do the other two's work of tiring her out for them. She mumbled something about how Monoma was just too fast to keep up with, a sentiment echoed much louder by Hitoshi a few seconds later. For his part, Monoma didn't seem all that bothered by the irritated glares he kept getting, shooting back with, "well that's the point of all this isn't it? To get you two up to speed so you can

actually keep up with us?" Izuku refrained from telling him that, while he was right, maybe he ought to tone down the haughtiness, they knew it was a losing battle from Tenya's constant griping. Still, they weren't entirely sure they could stop whatever Hitoshi was going to do to him if he continued being a snarky bastard.

They could be training too, goodness knows they were bored as hell standing around, but they'd determined that having them in a free for all would inevitably just turn it into a three on one as they were the one who everyone targeted first. Meaning that if they wanted this to have the effect of making sure their friends could keep track of multiple opponents at once, they had to sit on the sidelines and wait.

Overall, it was going great, though they didn't like that Hitoshi was still so hesitant to use his quirk in combat. They knew why, and they didn't want to force it lest they send him into a panic attack like they almost did last time, and it was never a good idea for a vigilante to use their quirk, but if push came to shove, they needed to know that he'd use it if it meant survival. They had little to worry about when it came to Monoma and Mei, since he was already incredibly proficient with his quirk and she didn't have much need to use Zoom in combat.

When Izuku finally called the training to a halt, they gave everyone a quick once over to make sure nobody was too exhausted before letting them off to relax.

Now if only they could do the same.

Instead of stewing in their thoughts, something they tried very hard to never do, they decided it would be far more productive to go check on their friends individually.

They decided their safest bet was the least tired of the lot, which happened to be Monoma. He looked up from his book as he heard them approach, a smile on his face, "ah, Izuku, did you want something?"

They shook their head, silently settling next to him and observing, eventually though, they found it in themself to interrupt his break with a tap on the shoulder, signing, "what's so important about this to you anyway?"

Monoma looked confused at their question, "the vigilantism you mean? Or taking down the CRC?"

"Both."

“Well,” he sighed, “shouldn’t you know this stuff? You became a vigilante, wasn’t it because you wanted to help people, even when you couldn’t do it legally?”

Izuku nodded, “yeah, I just, wanted to know if that’s how you felt too.” They’d actually have been *surprised* at any other answer, but that just cemented their fear that there was nothing on earth that could stop Monoma from doing this.

They let him get back to reading his book as they wandered off to where Hitoshi had collapsed on the boxes, “hi.”

He glared up at them, it was nowhere near as intimidatingly as they were used to though, so it had no effect, “hey.”

“Can I ask you something?” They got flipped off for that, but Hitoshi sighed and gave in anyway.

“Alright, shoot.”

“Are you actually happy with this?” They’d been wondering for some time now, if he wasn’t just looking for a way to get out his anger, like they sometimes did.

Hitoshi sat up at that, his eyes holding a stunned incredulousness as he stared at Izuku as if they’d just suggested that the sky was red, “yeah, of course I am! No part of all this could have ever given you a different impression!” Izuku made a mental note to get him comfortable with asking questions around Monoma, because this was getting slightly disconcerting, but first, they had other things to worry about.

“I wasn’t doubting you,” yes they were, and now they kind of felt guilty for it, “I just wanted to know.”

Hitoshi flopped back onto the boxes in a way that could not have been comfortable, “well, now you do, I feel better than I ever have in my entire life when I’m doing this, don’t you dare think otherwise.” The underlying ‘don’t you dare try convincing me to stop’ went unsaid.

Sensing that further prodding would be unwelcome, they moved on to Mei, who sat in a corner, tinkering with her new multitool. She didn’t acknowledge their presence for a bit as she secured a part in place, but once that was done she turned to them with a bright smile, “what’s up Izu?”

“The ceiling,” they deadpanned, getting a laugh from her before they continued, “but actually? I dunno, just wanted to see how you were holding up with the training.” It was one thing to deal with this kind of drilling when you had the basics down, Mei was starting almost from scratch.

She hummed, “I’m honestly doing great, exhausted, but great.”

Izuku nodded, “good.” Was all the response they gave before they retreated back to a corner with their own thoughts.

It was a while later that something actually interesting happened, Izuku was about to call the three to start training again, when Monoma stopped them.

“Izuku, what exactly is our plan here?” He asked, and when they gave him a questioning look he elaborated, “once we get the info.”

Ah. *Fuck.*

See, Izuku had been hoping, perhaps foolishly, that there was a chance they’d be able to do something about it before these three got too involved, which was also the reason they’d been doing solo patrols on the days the others were resting. Apparently they took just a bit too long to answer since Hitoshi spoke up.

“I’d also like to know the plan, that *definitely* doesn’t involve leaving us in the dust,” he gave them a pointed look. When had their disdain for the fact that their friends had turned to vigilantism become that apparent? It didn’t matter, Izuku knew they’d been figured out.

“Well, there isn’t one,” they admitted, “you were never supposed to be here in the first place, and I never had the chance to come up with a new course of action.” That was a lie, it had been three weeks, that was plenty of time, too much time if you asked them, there were people who needed to be rescued.

Luckily, it seemed the other three fell for it, and Mei excitedly piped up with, “okay, how about we help you come up with a plan?”

Izuku knew there was no way they were getting out of this one, so they acquiesced, “alright.”

They knew the worst details of this case weren’t unknown to their friends, but that didn’t stop them from accidentally dancing around the points until Monoma called them out on it. Eventually they just

pulled out their notebook, it always did help to get things on paper when their mind was too busy to focus. They sat in that corner, quietly scribbling away while they'd shooed the others off to go back to training. Training that was more important than ever if this plan was to go smoothly.

The first thing they knew was that there was no way in hell the four of them could take on the goddamn CRC alone, Izuku wouldn't even allow an attempt, not with Keigo's life on the line. The second thing they knew was that it would take a hell of a lot of convincing to get these bastards to trust their family enough to work with them. Hitoshi was the easiest, stick him in front of their dad or papa and he'd agree in a heartbeat, they paused before underlining that with the words 'last resort' because they also knew introducing Hitoshi to one of his idols would just be asking for trouble. Mei would follow Hitoshi. But then there was Monoma, and Izuku sighed, for having a hero parent, it seemed that the boy had some kind of problem about trusting heroes to do their jobs. Izuku knew that wasn't unfounded, there were many heroes that they thought didn't deserve the title because of one reason or another, but their family proved that there were those who did actually care about doing the right thing.

Then there was the fact that they'd have to tell their family about this fucking mess. They were *not* looking forward to that conversation.

They sighed, eventually settling on a plan that they knew they'd have to fight their friends about. They whistled to catch everyone's attention and waved their notebook in the air, signalling that they were done.

The four of them sat in a circle as Izuku began to explain, "we really can't do much, you have to know that."

Hitoshi growled, "that's bullshit."

They glared at him with a fierceness that quickly cowed him. "It's the truth, one, we're kids, two, there are already nearly two dozen heroes on this case, we'd just be a hinderance." They hurried before more protests could erupt from that, "don't you dare fight me on this, I'm the most experienced here and I'm going to call the shots." They didn't particularly like having to essentially pull rank, these were their friends after all, but if it got the point across.

"Okay, are we all on the same page?" They took the silence as a yes, "good, because here's the deal, we get that information and we give it

to the heroes, specifically the ones I work with," Monoma gave them a subtle look at that but didn't say anything, "then we keep doing what we're doing, making sure nobody else gets hurt, while the heroes go and fix things. The only reason we're ever going to get involved beyond that is if something gets completely fucked up." And even then, Izuku would rather do it themself and face their friends' wrath after.

They could see that nobody was particularly enthusiastic about the plan, but finally, Mei sighed, "it does make sense," she said.

Neither of the boys looked happy about it but they both agreed as well, and Izuku smiled, "good, one more thing though."

Mei tilted her head, "what?"

"I know we've been using the tactic of just, *not communicating* during fights, but that's going to get unreliable fast from here on out, so we're going to have to figure out a way to address each other that isn't our names."

Hitoshi's eyes lit up, "codenames!"

Izuku nodded, glad they could lighten the mood after that, "yeah, any ideas?"

Monoma raised his hand, "well, I could always use the name I planned to use when I became a hero," of course he already had that figured out.

"Ooh, what is it?" Mei grinned.

"Phantom Thief, it's a reference to my quirk, and I just like the idea of phantom thieves, though maybe it's not such a good idea to have something connecting me to vigilantism when I do become a hero."

"Phantom."

All eyes turned to Hitoshi as he spoke, he looked around with a start as if realising he had said that out loud, Monoma frowned, "Phantom?"

Hitoshi ducked his head in embarrassment, "oh, it's nothing, just, if you wanted to avoid using that name, I thought you could just shorten it to Phantom, y'know, it kinda fits with Wraith anyway, since a phantom's another kind of ghost and all."

“You’re a genius,” Monoma muttered, “Phantom it is then.”

Izuku nodded, “what about you two?”

Both were silent, thinking for a moment, but then Monoma spoke up, “if we’re keeping with the ghost theme, I think Shinso should be called Banshee.”

Hitoshi made a face at that, “Banshee? Why Banshee?”

“They’re known for their voices, plus they’re harbingers of death and I thought you’d appreciate that,” Monoma said simply, “do you have any better ideas?”

It seemed that the answer to that was no since Hitoshi just kept his mouth shut. Mei snapped her fingers, “alright, well I’m not going to break the theme, so I’ll go with Tsukumogami.”

Monoma laughed, “the object spirit?”

“Well I *am* an inventor!” Mei proclaimed, “and I like it.”

Izuku hummed, “it’s a bit long,” they signed, thinking of Aunt Nemuri’s requirements for a good hero name, “we can shorten it to Tsuku if we need to call quickly.” Mei gave them a thumbs up.

Hitoshi looked around at his friends, a spark of determination in his eyes as he held out his hand, “we’re a team now.”

Monoma put his hand on top of Hitoshi’s, “I suppose we are.”

“What do you say Izuku? Teammates?” Mei asked, adding her hand to the pile.

Izuku smiled, signing before placing their hand on top, “teammates.”

Chapter End Notes

YIPPEEE

I have been sitting on those names for like, half the fic by the way, so I hope y'all like them.

Also holy fuck this is chapter one hundred. I didn't plan it this way, but it feels poetic to have the team finally assembled on a milestone chapter.

Chapter 101: Information gathered.

Chapter Summary

The four vigilantes head out on patrol.

Chapter Notes

Signed Dialogue
--- : POV switch

See the end of the chapter for more notes

There was a quiet tension in the air that night, at least, that's what it felt like for Izuku. They watched their parents carefully as both Dad and Papa seemed to be frantically going through the same files that they'd seen a dozen times over by now. Izuku knew the two would much rather be scouring the streets for information. But all the limelighters in the family had been barred from taking part in the investigation due to fear of the CRC figuring out their plans through the more public heroes. And Dad had been practically *ordered* by Granny Chiyo to take a rest after getting his arm broken during a fight the previous night. Which left nothing more to do but hope they could find a connection that the smartest mammal in Japan had somehow missed. It was pointless, even Nedzu had combed every scrap of info so thoroughly it would make anyone's head spin, but it wasn't about being *useful*, it was about doing anything not to feel *useless*.

Izuku's eyes drifted over to the couch before glancing back, unable to face the vacant pain in their brother's eyes. Touya had been bouncing between his siblings' estate and their place ever since Keigo was taken, unable to stand the emptiness of his own apartment. Of course what happened had hit him the hardest out of their entire family, Keigo was his roommate and his partner, and nothing could feel worse than waking up to a missing presence in your life. They would know, it had happened to them a few times, whenever one or both of their parents had to leave them for a few days due to a mission.

A soft sigh brought them out of their thoughts, and they focused on their papa, who'd finally given up on the files and was now turning his attention to the two siblings. "Hey, kiddos, are you holding up okay?" He asked, sitting down next to Touya and the cats who'd curled up on the couch, gesturing for Izuku to join as well.

Touya mumbled something incomprehensible, his hand fiddling with the earring he'd refused to let out of sight. Izuku couldn't help but hope that today would be the day that the feather dangling from that chain finally moved, but they knew it wasn't likely, whatever the CRC had done was keeping Keigo from using his quirk. A more insidious voice whispered in their mind that he could just be dead already, but they refused to believe that, not until they had his body in front of them for them to see with their own two eyes.

They shuffled over, leaning into Touya's side even as they couldn't look him in the eyes. Papa took one look at both of them and sighed, "hey Moonlight, c'mere would ya?" He called as he pulled the pair into a hug. Dad glanced up from the files, his frown deepening as he hurried over, joining the hug and sharing a look with Papa that Izuku was too mentally exhausted to decipher.

It didn't take long for Touya to start crying, which was about when Izuku quietly excused themself from the room. They knew their brother would rather have them there, but, they just couldn't bring themself to see him like that. It wasn't that they'd never seen him cry before, they'd seen it plenty of times, but there was just something about how utterly *heartbroken* it sounded nowadays that made their chest ache.

They slipped into their room, changing into their costume and opening the window. They felt the chill of the air hit them, a normally soothing feeling that lit up their veins, but tonight it just bit at whatever parts of their skin were exposed.

They stared up at the sky for a long time before they scribbled a note on a scrap of paper, letting anyone who checked on their room know that they'd gone on patrol. They then clipped the tracker to the inside of their hoodie and opened their text messages.

Cryptid Activity

10:30 PM

Hell spawn: *Is everyone ready?*

Existential Dread: *Ye*

safety hazard: *ready! (`• ˆ •´)*

dramatic Irony: *Of course!!*

Hell spawn: *Good, let's go.*

Izuku climbed out onto the fire escape, making sure to close the window behind them before taking off towards the factory. As they ran they sorted everything out in their head. The clock was ticking, and they were no closer to the solution, it didn't help that it seemed like their family, coupled with a few other heroes who'd also gotten their loved ones taken, were the only ones bothering to deal with this.

A large part of them felt guilty for doing all this behind their family's back, especially when everyone was already so stressed out. But they'd promised themself they'd explain everything as soon as Keigo was home, when everyone could handle the revelation that there were three new vigilantes running around Musutafu.

When they got to the factory, instead of going to the storage unit, they climbed up to the roof of the neighbouring building, waiting impatiently for their friends to show up. Izuku tightened their grip on their staff, their friends and, as of yesterday, their teammates. Sure, they had the training now, it wasn't as much as Izuku would like, but it was enough, but they hadn't managed to prove themselves to be capable of being vigilantes. There was a major difference between taking out some attackers and doing a full takedown of an organization like the CRC. Their friends could try all they liked, but they could hardly be considered real teammates just yet. Okay, that wasn't fair, were they vigilantes by the legal definition? Yes. Were they the kind of vigilantes that could keep up with Wraith? No. And Izuku would never force them to become that.

There were hushed whispers that caused Izuku to perk up, Hitoshi and Mei no doubt, though they wished the pair would keep their voices down. They were planning to hop down to greet them, but Mei instantly looked up, waving hello and scrambling up to join them on the roof, followed shortly by Hitoshi. It seemed their parkour training was really paying off, which was incredible considering it had only been two weeks since they'd started.

That just made them pause again, two weeks since their friends had decided to become vigilantes, nearly three weeks since Keigo had been kidnapped, they hoped he was alright.

"Hey Izu- uh, I mean Wraith!" Mei said correcting herself when Izuku glared at her for almost using their name.

"Hey Tsukumogami, Banshee, you two have everything?" They asked,

eyes flicking over the two of them. Both were wearing clothes that covered most of their form as Izuku had instructed, which for Hitoshi apparently meant a hoodie, similar to Izuku's except his was a dark purple, and for Mei it was a baggy turtleneck and a beanie to stuff her hair in.

"Yeah, we do," Hitoshi said brought out a small pocket-knife, flicking it open, and Mei brandished a baseball bat. Izuku knew neither weapon was the *most* effective thing their friends could be using but, considering those had to be things that wouldn't be concerning if missing, it was acceptable.

Izuku nodded, tilting their head as they heard the clack of familiar shoes dancing across the concrete below. They never got tired of hearing how gracefully Monoma walked; it was as if the boy treated the whole world like a ballet stage. It seemed both Hitoshi and Mei had heard it too as they looked over the edge, waving hello as Monoma skipped up the windowsills bowing dramatically when he reached the top. "Good evening to you all!" He was dressed in a button up and, like Mei, had a hat to cover his head, though his was a baseball cap.

Izuku smiled in greeting as they dug through their pockets, picking out three of their spare masks and handing them over so that their friends could cover the lower halves of their faces. "Let's get going, Phantom, you're with me in the front," out of the three of them, Izuku trusted Monoma the most to be able to at least keep up with them, he'd proven as much the first time they'd run into each other.

Sure enough, he easily matched their steps, allowing the other two to trail a bit behind to be able to pace themselves better. Izuku was worried they'd have to slow down at some point or risk leaving Hitoshi and Mei behind entirely, but hopefully they'd be stopping to fight or eavesdrop on CRC members often enough to allow the pair to catch up. Whatever, they didn't have the time to be babying these three anymore, either they all managed, or they'd be forced to go home.

Neito was almost startled by the sudden shift in demeanour, no longer was Izuku, well, *Izuku*, Tenya's cousin, the child of heroes, and Neito's almost friend, instead they were truly just Wraith, the infamous vigilante. All hints of friendliness seemed to disappear from their form as they scoured the streets, as silent and stealthy as their namesake. It didn't even seem like they were checking behind them to look for the other three, but it could just be that they were keeping track of the

number of footsteps they were hearing.

It didn't take long for them to stumble into a fight, and before either Neito or Wraith could signal for the others to stop, Shinso launched himself over the edge of the roof and down to the street. Wraith snarled at the sudden movement before signing, "stay here, I'll get that idiot," before leaping into the fight themself.

Hatsume dropped to one knee as she overlooked the fight, "hey, um, Phantom, what just happened?" She whispered.

Neito shrugged, "Banshee got impatient, Wraith's cleaning up the mess."

It was startlingly easy to slip into codenames, at least for him, it was apparent that the other two were struggling a bit. Perhaps it was because he grew up in this world and had to rather quickly get used to the fact that 'mum' wasn't an appropriate thing to call a hero in costume. There was always that difference when it came to heroes, most preferred to keep their civilian identities separate from their hero personas to the point where it became a kind of mental switch that could be flipped to change which attitude was front and centre. Then again, some heroes never bothered with that kind of thing, those kinds of people were the ones who fully devoted themselves to their work until the border between their identities was non-existent.

It didn't take long for Wraith to return, dragging Shinso by the collar and dropping him to the ground, "what was that?" They asked, pulling their hood down so everyone could see the stern look they were giving.

Shinso rolled his eyes, "vigilantism, the thing we're out here to do."

"Wrong answer, don't play dumb with me Hitoshi."

The two had a staring contest for a good few seconds before Shinso relented, "fine, fine, I'm not gonna go run off on my own again."

Wraith nodded and took off once again. Neito let out a groan of frustration as he chased after them, would it *kill* them to at least give him a warning?

The rest of the night went fairly smoothly, and besides Wraith not being the only one fighting anymore, nothing seemed to be all that different until near morning.

The four of them had stopped for a break, which was only happening because Izuku had threatened the other three with being sent home if they tried to work themselves to death. Neito had a sneaking suspicion that Izuku would have continued their patrol if it wasn't for the three of them, or perhaps that was simply an observation given the way they kept darting off and returning. Shinso was irritated that they were clearly still doing vigilante work while forcing their teammates to rest, but Hatsume reminded him that he'd agreed to the 'what Izuku says goes' rule that they'd imposed that first night.

Shinso huffed, "yeah, but that was *before* we had training, now we can definitely hold our own."

Neito also wasn't too happy with being treated like an inferior teammate, but he at least could see where Izuku was coming from. If this was an official investigation with actual pros, the three of them would basically be work-studies students with Wraith as their mentor. It made sense that they'd be left out of some things, that was how it went after all, hero students would train and work hard to prove themselves worthy of being let off the leash, ideally by the time they became third years. Neito knew none of them had proven themselves to Izuku yet.

But just as he was about to explain that to the other two, Shinso stood up, "well, I don't know about you two, but I remember which direction they headed last, and I'm gonna go catch up."

Neito spluttered, trying to stop him. Unfortunately, he'd already run off, leaving the other two to trail behind him. Neito quickly caught up, "they said to stay put," he hissed.

Shinso just gave him a look that said he didn't care and kept going.

It didn't take long to find Wraith, perched up on a ledge and frozen still as they watched whatever was going on below. Neito slowed to a crouch, signing for the others to do the same, he wished he could have used one of the signals his mother recently taught him after some persistent badgering on his part, but only Wraith would understand those.

Wraith gave them all a disapproving glare as the trio crept to the ledge but otherwise didn't move, listening to the pair of voices that drifted up clear as day from the street below, seriously, had these people ever heard of whispering? Not that Neito was complaining since it meant that he wouldn't need to struggle to piece together

these plans.

It just seemed to be the usual horrendous stuff, and Neito was beginning to tune it out despite his best efforts to stay focused, but then he heard something that made his blood run cold.

“We’re gettin’ rid of the hostages Wednesday, yeah?”

“That’s what the higher ups said, it’s about time really, those beasts have been such a pain to keep alive.”

“Heh, can’t wait to see the looks on their faces when they realise their precious heroes didn’t save ‘em after all.”

“It is a shame, we will end up losing quite a few of our comrades to this, but I don’t see the heroes backing down any time soon, and it isn’t like we couldn’t build our numbers back up.”

The CRC was planning to kill the hostages? *In three days!?* Neito looked at Izuku, who looked equally horrified, and then at Shinso and Hatsume, who looked concerned but didn’t seem to have fully grasped the situation yet. He put a hand over his mouth to keep from letting out any kind of noise, he couldn’t be the one to blow their cover, not at a crucial moment like this.

“I’m just happy to say good riddance to Kiyashi, y’know how hard it is ta hide stuff in that place?”

“Indeed, far too many people, but that abandoned store makes for quite the dungeon.”

Kiyashi? He supposed it made sense to have the CRC coalesce somewhere in Tokyo, that’s where they had the most members, but at the same time, shouldn’t they have picked somewhere more inconspicuous? Whatever, he wasn’t about to complain, it just meant more heroes could get involved. He also felt a pang of irritation that it was too far for him to travel alone, meaning that he wouldn’t be able to help even if something drastic did happen.

The pair down below dispersed after exchanging a few more far less important words, nothing at all that could narrow down the location of said store. So as soon as they were alone again, the four vigilantes began to talk in hushed voices.

“Hey, Monoma,” Shinso muttered, only to get glared at by Izuku, “right, right, Phantom, whatever. I know you’re looking for your

person, but I don't think you ever mentioned anything about heroes, or hostages."

Neito froze, "I, um, well, you see," he looked at Izuku, hoping they could help him out, but they seemed just as startled as he was, and if he didn't know better he'd think they looked *scared*. Eventually he settled on something akin to the truth, "well, you see, some heroes recently got on the CRC's bad side for arresting a bunch of their members, so the CRC decided to retaliate by holding people hostage until the charges are dropped. The person I'm looking for was one of those taken hostage."

Shinso and Hatsume exchanged a look, "so," Hatsume began slowly, "this isn't just a small kidnapping, is it?"

"Do you see why I was so insistent on making sure you didn't get too involved?" Izuku asked.

Shinso sighed, "I guess, though I don't take back anything I said, we're in this as a team now and there's nothing you can do about it."

"Well, we have the info you needed, right?" Hatsume said, "so, everything should be fine, your group of heroes can save everyone, the people that got arrested can get what they deserve, and everyone's safe and happy!"

Oh how Neito wished it was always that easy, no, if he knew anything about heroics, this was going to be a messy, complicated affair with at least one major injury or casualty, likely civilian. The look in Izuku's eyes showed that they also knew just how untrue that statement was, but they didn't refute it, which was rather strange considering they were always so quick to point out the harsh details of what fighting evil truly meant.

Instead, after a few moments of thinking, they signed, "yeah, everything's going to be fine, I know it will be, because I know the heroes on this case are going to do everything in their power to make sure of it." They sure did have a lot of confidence in their papa, and his colleagues, and probably their dad as well, though no sane underground hero would be on this mission unless they'd been personally affected.

Neito smiled, "well, I think we all ought to go home now, before our parents miss us too badly."

The others agreed and began to make their way back towards the

factory. They dropped Shinso and Hatsume off at their apartment building, but before Izuku could run off, Neito caught them, “hey, are you sure about what you told them? That the heroes can handle it?”

Izuku paused, “I think we both know there’s nothing you can be sure of in this line of work, but I didn’t want to give them anxiety over something they’re not really involved in. Besides, even the two of us have to have some faith, otherwise we’ll just drown.”

Neito nodded, “yeah, just a bit of faith to keep our heads up,” he looked Izuku in the eye, “I wish you all the best of luck.”

Chapter End Notes

Heck yeah! Time to go get the bird back!

(Also, Wyvern try to stay on schedule challenge: Impossible)

Chapter 102: The CRC gets their asses kicked.

Chapter Summary

The heroes do a raid.

Chapter Notes

Hey, I know I'm a week late, mental health shit happened, but I'll try to get the next chapter out early to make up for it ^v^"

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Kiyashi. The CRC was holding the hostages in Kiyashi.

Hizashi stared at the assembled group of heroes as Nedzu went over the new information they'd gotten from 'an anonymous informant.' Really, he was damn proud of Izuku for finding something this important. Shouta sat to his right, looking surprisingly alert for having basically spent the entirety of the day knocked out from Chiyo's quirk because he was insistent that he be able to help the mission. To his left was Touya, who was tapping his arm nervously as he stared unblinkingly at the giant screen. Hizashi surreptitiously nudged his son's shoulder, giving the boy an encouraging look, and in return he got a smile that looked more like a bottled up scream.

Most of the people there were those they knew, the twelve heroes that made up UA's staff of course, Tensei and Touya, Emi had joined after hearing about what happened from Shouta and Sekijiro, and a few other pros who'd had loved ones taken.

Nedzu and Tsukauchi stood at the front of the table, the detective was doing a good job hiding his distress about Sansa being missing, but then again, all of them were putting up a front of some kind. The various others were scattered, some had chosen to sit, but others, like Ryo and Anan, had taken to standing, the barely concealed want to pace around clear in their expressions. And, of course, there was one more person in the room. They were not physically present, but thanks to a little ingenuity from Nedzu, a small camera placed on Ryo's jacket, and a one-way link to Hizashi's comm, Izuku was observing the whole thing from the principal's office at UA.

Locating the hideout wasn't simple, the four underground heroes here had spent the last day monitoring the various abandoned shops around, with Nedzu and Higari scouring through weeks' worth of

camera footage from all over the city. But in the end, they'd narrowed it down to a single place that was large enough to work as a base, and far away from any populated areas, and with a notable increase in CRC activity around it right when the kidnappings started.

So here they were, close to two-dozen heroes, ready to storm the place and rescue the hostages. It had to be today, since they'd already used up one of the three days finding the place, and by tomorrow they'd be cutting it way too close. Hizashi glanced back at the screen, memorizing the diagram for the third time that meeting, trying to keep his nerves at bay. The idea was for the heavy hitters and crowd control, that being himself, Ryo, Crimson Riot, and Touya, to just focus on clearing a path to the hostages, with the undergrounders providing support. The rest of their mid and long-range fighters would follow behind the opening created, taking out the remaining CRC members to make sure the main group wouldn't get attacked. And a few of the less combative heroes, like Hirohito, Ken, and Manual would be outside, sealing the exits and making sure nobody escaped.

With the plan laid out, everyone hurried to Kiyashi, they were all in plainclothes and had taken different paths to the area with the goal of converging on the hideout. After all, a group of two dozen people in bright costumes wasn't exactly what anyone would call inconspicuous. It also meant that any of them with bulkier support gear were going to have to leave it behind, and while that could be dangerous, it was necessary to avoid the CRC getting suspicious and just killing the hostages before they even got there.

Hizashi walked with Touya, since Shouta was with the other undergrounders and their son *needed* one of his fathers with him right now. Takeshita was also with them, casually trying to chat with both of them in some kind of attempt to lighten the mood. Hizashi gladly took him up on the offer, anything to kill the silence, but he could feel Touya next to him trying to disappear where he stood as the sound became overwhelming. So after a little bit he politely cut the conversation off, ignoring the way his own mind screamed at him that there needed to be *noise*, that someone needed to talk to him, to acknowledge his existence. He shook his head; he could handle the discomfort for a while for his son's sake.

He looped an arm over Touya's shoulders, a silent reminder that he was there, a steady support in the turbulence. He felt Touya lean into the touch, quietly appreciating it.

They reached the store, Ken and Hirohito's group was there first, just

as planned, so that they could start setting up a perimeter. The undergrounders were lurking somewhere undetected, Hizashi found it genuinely impressive how a man like Sekijiro could just vanish if it wanted to. A few seconds later they were joined by the rest of the groups, some pros having splintered off to get whatever stray civilians had wandered here out of the way.

This was it. Hizashi nodded at Crimson Riot who busted down the door and stepped aside quickly to let Hizashi clear the area with his quirk, knocking away most of the people milling about in the main room. Hearing the noise, more CRC members flooded out of side rooms, but that wasn't his problem. He ran ahead, keeping pace with Hound Dog as in front of them Dabi let loose a swathe of flames that Crimson Riot easily barrelled through to catch any people who'd avoided getting burnt.

Behind him he could hear the sounds of fighting, but he couldn't focus on that as a new flood of enemies came forward, quirks active, in particular, one lady with a shield quirk. Hizashi grinned, too bad that wasn't going to help them. There was a shout of confusion as the blue glow suddenly disappeared and, with two terrible puns yelled from somewhere near him, a good chunk of people on the left burst out laughing, the rest on the right side were taken out by splatters of red. Hizashi took a sharp breath and both Hound Dog and Dabi covered their ears as he yelled away the majority of the ones in the middle. Some who'd lucked into being outside of Eraserhead's field of view managed to jump back into the action with their quirks, but no amount of offense could stand up to the unbreakable wall that was Crimson Riot, so they really didn't stand a chance.

Hound dog suddenly put a hand to his comm calling out that he'd managed to pick up on the hostages' scent, he then turned to the other three next to him before beginning to head off in a particular direction. That was their cue to leave the fighting to the others, with Eraserhead and Ms Joke joining them, as they headed deeper into the store.

The back of the building was less populated, but there were some stragglers who either didn't get the memo about there being a raid or were just not suited for combat in the slightest. Either way, the combined power of six pro heroes made quick work of that lot.

As soon as the fighting was over, Hizashi gave the others a subtle once over, though Hound Dog, Eraserhead, and Dabi definitely knew he was staring and just glanced back as a quick 'I'm fine.' He really didn't

believe that, especially not with Touya, but he could circle back to that later. Crimson Riot looked alright, a bit worn out but not hurt, and Ms Joke had some gashes in her arm from someone who'd been summoning knives. The rest of them also had some minor injuries, and Hizashi could feel his throat starting to get sore, but that wasn't really an issue since he could probably leave any remaining combat to the others.

Hound Dog took the lead after that, nose in the air as he pinpointed the exact location of the hostages. Hizashi wondered idly if he should check up on Ryo after this considering he heard a good number of CRC-typical insults hurled his way earlier. Oh who was he kidding, there was *absolutely* going to be a cuddle pile in the teachers' lounge after this was over. To be fair, it wasn't like the others seemed to be entirely fine either, considering the fact that he could see Touya start tapping his arm the longer the search took, or that Shouta had begun sticking close to their son with that familiar paranoia-fuelled protectiveness.

Finally, they found the room with the hostages, who all understandably flinched back as the door opened, they were far enough away from the front that they probably had no idea about the fighting. Hizashi held up his hands, toning down the voice he usually put on to something a bit less energetic, "hey, chill, we're gonna get you out of here."

A few people glanced around before recognizing that they were heroes, and a visible relief swept over all their faces. Crimson Riot and Eraserhead had already begun undoing the heavy chains that bound these people, though the thicker ones required some concentrated heat from Dabi to soften the links enough that Hound Dog could pull them apart. Hizashi and Ms Joke began ushering the group outside while the rest stayed to do a thorough sweep of the area because there were a few people that had apparently been kept in the other rooms because they needed extra security.

Luckily, or unluckily depending on the civilians' disposition, Hizashi and Ms Joke were great at lightening the mood, though neither of them felt much like bantering right now, they knew it was better for the former hostages to be reassured that everything was alright. There were quite a few with injuries, nothing severe since the CRC needed them in decent condition for the bargain to work. Still, they were all led to where Recovery Girl was waiting a little bit away from the building.

Hizashi looked around as a few of the other hostages slowly trickled out. Copycat was hugging a bear heteromorph, Manual and a cricket heteromorph were talking animatedly, Tsukauchi had immediately run to Sansa, and the other heroes were reuniting with their loved ones as well.

And then an ear piecing cry echoed through the comms. Hizashi dashed back into the building, immediately recognizing whose voice that was as he gave a look to the rest of the family to let him handle this and to keep the other heroes out.

He found Touya on his knees in one of the back rooms, with Shouta holding him tightly and looking like he desperately wanted to punch someone right now. Hizashi knelt down next to them, “what happened, what’s wrong?” He asked, reaching up to turn off Touya’s comm since he must have left it on after calling out the last hostage location.

Shouta shook his head, “this was the last of the rooms,” he said, gritting his teeth as he forced the words out.

Hizashi’s mind raced, slowly figuring out what that meant before it clicked. Futilely, he ran through the list of hostages in his mind, knowing damn well what he’d find. He turned on his own comm, setting it to the frequency their family used for private communication.

“He’s not here.”

Chapter End Notes

Evil cackling

Chapter 103: The CRC gets their asses kicked (for real this time)

Chapter Summary

> Izuku knows they don't have much time to get Keigo back, and much to their annoyance, they won't be alone.

Chapter Notes

> Signed Dialogue

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“He’s not here”

Those hopeless words echoed through Izuku’s head as they stared at the computer in front of them. They couldn’t see what their parents were doing, since the camera was on Uncle Ryo, who was outside tending to the hostages, but they didn’t need visuals to know what the look on their brother’s face probably was.

All the UA heroes quickly excused themselves from the situation, and Izuku caught a glimpse of their parents leading Touya out of the building. It was a smart move, the civilians had just gotten rescued, and seeing half the heroes who’d just saved them begin to panic would just cause undue hysteria. It was only after the group got decently far away did it feel like the collective façade they’d put on broke and a lot of people started crying. Granny Chiyo was just trying to comfort people while healing any who were injured, with varying levels of success. Their parents were doing their best not to break down in order to be able to keep Touya from accidentally making his eyes bleed again, though it seemed it was already too late for that. Uncle Ken had his eyes closed and was actively holding back from sobbing. Uncle Hirohito wasn’t bothering with even pretending and was screaming into his hands to muffle the sound, which was just terrifying when heard through his voice filter. Aunt Nemuri and Uncle Sekijiro were utter wrecks. Aunt Kazumi was pacing around and muttering to herself. Uncle Tensei just took off his helmet, staring out into nothing while Bibi Anan clung tightly to him with tears rolling down their face. Izuku couldn’t tell what Uncle Ryo was doing, but it wasn’t that hard to guess considering they were hearing a bit of growling.

The private line blared to life as they heard Bibi Higari speak, “any clues on a new location?” Xe asked, a soft clacking sound echoing through the comms as if xe was typing furiously on a keyboard.

“Not that I can tell,” Nedzu squeaked, his voice betraying extreme focus, which, considering his quirk, was concerning. “It’s possible someone might have tried to communicate with whatever location is holding Keigo, but if they did it would have been during the raid, which means it’s far too late to catch the signal.”

“I’ll keep an eye out anyway,” Bibi Higari said, “the HN signals should be easy enough to distinguish from someone else’s phone.”

“Me ‘n Shou can go interrogate some of those bastards,” Uncle Sekijiro offered, its voice thick with rage and its fists clenched tightly as it fought the urge to punch something.

“You can try, but it would take a while,” Bibi Anan pointed out, “if they sent a signal then we don’t have time, they might have already-”

“Don’t.” Touya’s shaky voice crackled through the comms, and Izuku could see him cover his ears, as if trying to block out the idea, “don’t fucking say it.”

“Okay, okay,” Uncle Ken tried desperately to stay calm, “let’s not lose our heads just yet, they might not have had the chance to inform anyone at all,” he tried hopefully.

“Guys, we got something!” Bibi Higari suddenly interrupted, silencing everyone. Izuku leaned forward in the chair, listening intently.

Nedzu continued the announcement, “it appears that, while we have not found any signs of a sent signal, we are exactly one member of the CRC short from the number we knew to be guarding the place.”

“Someone’s tryin’ to go among the willows!?” Aunt Kazumi snapped.

“That would be correct. Ryo, if you would?”

Uncle Ryo didn’t verbally respond, but seeing as Izuku’s view was rapidly moving, they figured he was trying to track the missing person. In addition, they could hear Nedzu calling out estimated paths based on what the cameras in the area were showing. How exactly had he gained access to those cameras? Probably because between him and Bibi Higari there was nothing that they couldn’t hack. Was that exactly *legal*? Well, better not to ask.

All signs pointed to the bastard having dashed near the start of the raid, either running like a damn *coward*, or going off to inform the other location, either way, this was their best lead. Preferably, they would have been able to have Nedzu and Bibi Higari go through the computers in this hideout, but that would take time, time they no longer had if the CRC knew what they were up to, so guesswork it was.

Izuku heard the location call out from Nedzu and realised quickly that the criminal was actually passing near UA. They didn't have to think twice, just called in their intentions, grabbed their costume, and ran off. Either they got there first or someone else in their family, either way, it was better to increase their chances.

They hurried out of UA, to avoid attracting attention they used Nedzu's door, which their biometrics had been added to because despite what the rat claimed they were *absolutely* his favourite family member.

Their hand stayed on their comms the entire time as Nedzu called out a slowly narrowing range of directions that the guy could've run towards as well as a physical description for identification. Between the co-ordination from the pair still at the heroes' base of operations for this raid, and the voices of the rest of their family jumping in occasionally as they all switched in and out of mute to give any new information they nearly had an exact location. Izuku couldn't help but notice the only voice that wasn't present was Touya's; they wanted to ask if he was alright, but the others were with him and would keep him stable.

They ran for a while, taking the rooftops so they could just beeline for the area and, after doing some quick maths in their head, they *really* hoped they wouldn't pass through where they thought they were going to pass through, or they might be in trouble in more ways than one.

Their eyes narrowed as they spotted the fucker, idiot didn't even ditch the mask. They called it in, getting back words of encouragement from everyone as Uncle Tensei assured Izuku that he'd be able to catch up before long.

They hurriedly closed in, being careful not to be seen so that the unsuspecting moron could hopefully lead them right to where they were keeping Keigo, and then someone tackled him. At first they were confused about the blur that had just taken their target out, but then

they remembered why they'd been so eager to avoid this area. Damn it.

They jumped down and found Mei pinning the guy to the ground. She was dressed for vigilantism despite it being the *middle of the day* because their friends had decided that if Izuku wasn't going to let them help any further with the investigation, then they'd just continue patrolling. They sighed softly, this was going to be a pain to try and explain, wasn't it?

Mei looked up, "Wraith!" She exclaimed, causing two more figures to scurry out of a nearby alleyway and stare at them.

"What are you doing here?" Monoma asked, before his face turned to the CRC member writhing under Mei's grip; Izuku had to admit, she'd gotten scarily strong between training and always hauling around scrap metal. "Ah I see."

"One of the bastards escaped Kiyashi." Hitoshi indirectly asked, and Izuku nodded.

"Yeah," they signed, "but, I was kinda hoping to follow him, and now that's not an option."

"Follow him?" Mei asked, her voice strained as she fought to keep the guy pinned.

"There's another location, he was probably headed there." And now they'd need another way to figure out where Keigo was, and they didn't know how much time they had left.

They heard Monoma curse under his breath, "how many people are left?"

Izuku hesitated at that, their hands shaking as they signed, "one."

Monoma blinked at that, "one? They needed a whole other location for a single person?"

Yeah, when you didn't have the context it did sound utterly insane, "he's a hero, the only one they captured, they probably needed extra security on him." Izuku signed, though their mind was still racing, finally they had a good idea, "Banshee, can you use your quirk on this guy and get him to say where the other location is?" They knew Hitoshi hated using his quirk, but they *needed* him to do this for them right now.

Hitoshi visibly faltered, “I, I can’t,” He was trembling already but damn it this was a matter of Keigo’s *life* he didn’t have a fucking *choice*

“Use your quirk.” They repeated insistently, halfway contemplating yanking him forward and just forcing him to ask a question.

Hitoshi’s eyes were panicked, and he shook his head, “no, I, I can’t do it-”

Monoma slapped him in the face, and just as Hitoshi was about to yell at him for that, the other boy turned to the man still trying to escape Mei’s grasp, “where’s the other location?”

The CRC member scoffed, “as if I’d ever tell you-” The man’s eyes went white.

“There we go,” Monoma said, smug satisfaction in his voice, “alright, now, *where is the other location?*”

The man rattled off an address that, Izuku hurried to check as Hitoshi and Monoma began to bicker.

“You didn’t have to slap me to copy my quirk you ass!”

“No, but you absolutely deserved that.” Monoma snapped, “you want to save people? Then don’t be a coward when a life is on the line!” Hitoshi looked stunned, and while Izuku sympathized with why he wouldn’t use his quirk, Monoma was absolutely right.

They shifted on their feet when they finally figured out that address, it was about ten kilometres south of where they were. They began to run off in that direction but quickly heard three sets of footsteps following. Oh please no.

They didn’t have to turn to know who was behind them, they’d memorised each of those gaits ages ago, but they still looked over their shoulder, just to glare at their friends and sign as they ran, “go away.”

“Not a chance!” Hitoshi said with a look of determination and worry on his face, “there’s no way in hell we’re letting you take on this entire hideout alone.”

Izuku wanted to scream in frustration. One, they didn’t need to take on the entire base, they just needed to get Keigo out, two, these three might have been doing vigilantism for three weeks now, but that was

not enough time for Izuku to even remotely trust them with this. “That’s not happening, you’re not experienced, you’d just be liabilities.”

“Maybe,” Monoma conceded, “but I’d argue that you being alone is worse, if anything happens you wouldn’t have *anybody* to cover your back, even if we are liabilities, we’re still extra hands to help.”

Izuku’s frustration was growing, of course Monoma would try and reason with them like this, he knew this world, but he still hadn’t *lived* in it, “I’m literally begging you, go home, you’re my friends, I can’t let you get hurt.”

“Sorry Izu, but you’re our friend too, and the same logic applies,” Mei responded.

Izuku bit back a sigh, knowing this would just go in circles, but they couldn’t just let a bunch of amateurs try and help on a rescue mission. While they were thinking, Monoma had rushed to catch up with them, grabbing their hand and pulling them to a halt.

He intertwined his fingers with theirs and pulled down his mask to give them a small smile, “Izuku, please, let us help you.”

The other two caught up, and Mei slung her arm over their shoulder, “yeah, c’mon, we might not be able to fight as well as you, but we *can* fight.”

Hitoshi grabbed their other hand in both of his, “we can’t just sit by knowing you could be getting hurt.

Izuku stared at their friends, at the *fire* in all three of their eyes. It was a familiar fire, the fire that shone in the eyes of those who wanted to protect people, whether that be heroes protecting a city, a family protecting one of their own, or, three friends protecting the person who’d protected them.

Finally, Izuku took a deep breath and nodded, knowing there was no way they were going to convince any of these three that leaving them to their own devices was the right option.

With that, the four took off running, with Izuku leading the way as they took to the rooftops for a more direct route.

It took a while, far longer than they’d have liked, but there were no nearby busses that could provide faster transport so running it was.

But eventually, they saw the place, an unassuming little house. Honestly if it wasn't for the fact that the address they'd been given had been said under the effect of Brainwashing they'd have thought they'd been lied to.

Izuku stopped far enough away that they couldn't be detected, looking back at their, well right now they supposed the three were really their teammates, whether they liked it or not. All three were looking at them, and Mei nodded encouragingly, "well Wraith, you're the boss, what's the plan?"

"Tsukumogami, use your quirk to see if you can spot any movement in or around the building as well as notable details about the layout, Phantom, I want you to copy her quirk and do the same from that rooftop for a different angle," Izuku gestured at another decent vantage point.

Both of their teammates nodded, with Monoma tapping Mei on the arm and hopping off to the other vantage point. Izuku and Hitoshi waited patiently for a little while, and then Izuku gave the hand signal to Monoma to come back, this was about all the time they were comfortable spending to map out the place.

"What's the report?"

Monoma spoke first, already knowing the efficient way to answer, "at least three enemies in the side room, it's a large space though, and no identifiable quirks, nothing in the alleyway."

Mei stared at him incredulously before speaking, attempting to copy his format, "um, I saw at least a dozen people in the front, seems like there's at least two more doors that lead to rooms other than the one Phantom was looking at, and I saw one of them floating some chains, nothing on the streets though."

Izuku nodded, "right, what weapons do you all have on you?" They should probably have taken stock of that on the way here, but they'd been a bit distracted thinking about Keigo.

Hitoshi held up a pocket-knife, Monoma had a pair of his mother's tonfā, and Mei, surprisingly, held up a slingshot, she looked a bit sheepish, "sorry, it's just what I grabbed this morning, I've got some of my smoke bombs too."

Izuku shook their head, "as long as you can use it well enough not to hinder the fight," they signed before beginning to plan in their head,

curbing the urge to begin muttering as they always had to when they were on duty. “Okay, Banshee, stick with me, we’ll sneak around the back, get in through the side room and start whacking people, Phantom, Tsukumogami follow behind and clean up the stragglers. Our main objective is to find the hostage and get him out, prioritize that over fighting.”

They looked around as their teammates nodded. They stepped back and put a hand up to their comm, letting their family know they’d found the location, getting various shouts of ‘kick their asses!’ In return. Despite their focus solely on the base they were about to ambush, they couldn’t help but smile as they always did whenever their family cheered them on. They muted themself on the comm, otherwise their family would *absolutely* get more freaked out than they already were if they heard Izuku get hit. It probably wouldn’t happen, but just in case.

As they approached the side door, Izuku took the opportunity to glance in the window, it seemed that Monoma’s assessment was right. So they gave Hitoshi a nod and then kicked in the door, running in and bashing the first person they saw in the knees with their staff. Hitoshi followed suit, and while a pocket-knife wasn’t the best weapon for keeping distance, it was more a fear tactic so that Hitoshi could kick and punch people while warding off incoming attacks with the threat of maiming.

Soon, other people filled into the room, and they all heard a quiet click as a round object flew past Izuku and hit one of the newcomers in the face, knocking them out as a cloud of smoke caused confusion. Izuku took the chance to dart through the crowd followed by Mei who picked up the pieces of her bomb along the way. They just hoped that Hitoshi and Monoma had the good sense to take the opening she had set up.

There were two CRC members hanging back, and they were hurrying to the far door, so that’s probably where they were keeping Keigo. Izuku darted towards them, and while they raised their staff to fight, some of the metal chains lying around suddenly restrained the pair. They glanced back and noticed Monoma, who had his hand on another person that had been knocked out by Hitoshi, feeling a bit of pride at his quick thinking. They busted down the door bracing themself for what they’d find inside.

They bit their tongue to avoid a gasp as they saw Keigo in the back corner of the room, chained up and knocked out. He didn’t seem to be

too hurt, but it was clear some of the feathers on his wings had been plucked. His visor was cracked and his clothing slightly torn, but at least he was breathing.

They ran up to him, beginning to try and undo the chains as they heard their teammates run up beside them. They felt a hand on their shoulder, “Wraith, let me,” Monoma said, using the quirk he’d copied to make the chains untangle themselves.

Izuku gave him a grateful nod as they awkwardly tried to pick up Keigo and ending up kind of having to drag him. Mei wordlessly helped them lift him, and between the two of them they managed to carry him in a way that let them still move decently enough.

With that, the four of them began running to the entrance, but the other CRC members had recovered from the smoke bomb. Shit, they were outnumbered and two of them were essentially out of the fight since they had to keep Keigo safe. Izuku’s eyes darted around as Monoma and Hitoshi stood protectively in front of them and Mei, trying to figure out what they could do.

Hitoshi glanced at them, then at Monoma, and something in his eyes seemed to harden into determination as he turned to the many people about to try and kill them, “hey! Why the hell do you hate heteromorphs anyways?” He said in a shaky voice.

Izuku stared at him incredulously but was incredibly grateful as one of the members scoffed and began to answer only to have her eyes turn white. Hitoshi took the chance, “fight the people in skull masks.”

It was a precise enough command that hopefully didn’t require too much thought for it to work, and sure enough, the lady turned and began using her quirk against her fellow CRC members. Izuku and Mei took the chance created by the chaos to run Keigo to the front door, which Hitoshi quickly opened, and they all hurried outside into the street.

Some remaining CRC members came running after them, but now that Izuku and Mei could leave Keigo on the ground, they joined the boys in trying to fight back the stragglers.

Izuku winced as they got grabbed by someone, but then there was a flash of red and all the remaining attackers were pinned by feathers. Izuku glanced back to Keigo, noticing that his eyes were now open and nearly sobbed in relief. They ran up to him as he groaned and tried to sit up, hugging him as tight as they dared without hurting

him.

“Hey,” he croaked, “what just happened?” Izuku didn’t respond, sure that if they tried they’d just burst into tears.

Monoma walked up to them, looking Keigo up and down before his eyes lit up, “you’re The Winged Hero, Hawks, right?” And then after a moment, “it’s been a while.”

Keigo glanced up, noticing the other three for the first time, “yeah, Monoma Neito, right? Copycat’s son?”

Monoma nodded as Hitoshi and Mei stared at the trio with dumbfounded expressions. After a second, Mei coughed conspicuously, “you two know him?”

“Kind of?” Monoma said, “I mean, it *has* been nearly two years since the last time I saw him in person.”

Hitoshi glanced at the red wings, “I’m guessing you’re not one of the popular ones, I don’t recognize you.”

Keigo shook his head, his brain seemingly clearing up from being knocked out, “nah, I’m a rescue hero, plus me and my partner try to keep to ourselves.”

Mei’s eyes gleamed, “*partner?*”

Keigo blushed profusely as he sputtered, “no, no, not like that, I mean, like, teammate,” Izuku was tempted to ask him why he was acting so defensive, but decided to drop it.

Mei pouted, though Monoma nodded, “yes, The Hellfire Hero, Dabi, together they’re the hero duo known as Phoenix.”

“Oh,” Hitoshi said, “damn, your partner sounds cool.”

Keigo chuckled, “that’s the second time you’ve said that.”

Hitoshi blinked, and Izuku nearly stuffed Keigo’s feathers into his mouth because clearly he was still way too loopy, “I’ve never heard of him before.”

“Not in costume,” Keigo grinned, “Ashes said you complimented his outfit back when he picked Zuku up from their sleepover with you.”

Izuku wanted to scream as they watched the gears turn in Hitoshi and

Mei's brains, "wait," Hitoshi said suddenly, "wait wait wait-"

*"Your brother is a **hero!?"*** Mei exclaimed suddenly, eyes wide.

Monoma just laughed, and when Izuku flipped him off he just said, "this is what you get for not telling them sooner."

Mei looked at him, "you knew?"

Monoma grinned, "oh, yeah, I told you two, I've known Izuku for like, three years now, I literally met them because we've both got heroes in our families."

While Hitoshi gaped at the two of them like a fish, Mei seemed delighted, "that's so cool!" She squealed.

Keigo glanced at the pair, "Hatsume Mei and Shinso Hitoshi, right? Izuku talks a lot about you two."

Just as Mei seemed ready to ask another question, Izuku interrupted her, "I'll answer whatever questions you have later, can we *please* get away from this place first?"

All of the others agreed. Keigo could walk now, though he leaned a bit on Hitoshi for support, and when they were far enough away he asked, "so why exactly are you three here?"

The three glanced at each other, then at Izuku, who just sighed and nodded, their family would figure it out when the rest of them got here anyways. Monoma spoke up, "we, um, you see, we were helping Izuku rescue you."

Keigo glanced incredulously at Izuku, knowing they wouldn't put civilians in danger like that, but they just pinched the bridge of their nose before signing, "trust me, they were going to help whether I liked it or not." And the glare they gave the other three made it *very* clear that they did not.

Whatever, that was a conversation for later, right now, they were just happy to have Keigo back, safe and sound.

Chapter End Notes

YAY THE BIRD IS BACK!!!

Also the Ghost Squad completed their first real mission!

Me: I can probably get this chapter out early!
My depression: haha, no

God I hate that my mom moved back in with my shitty ass dad and took me with her :<

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!